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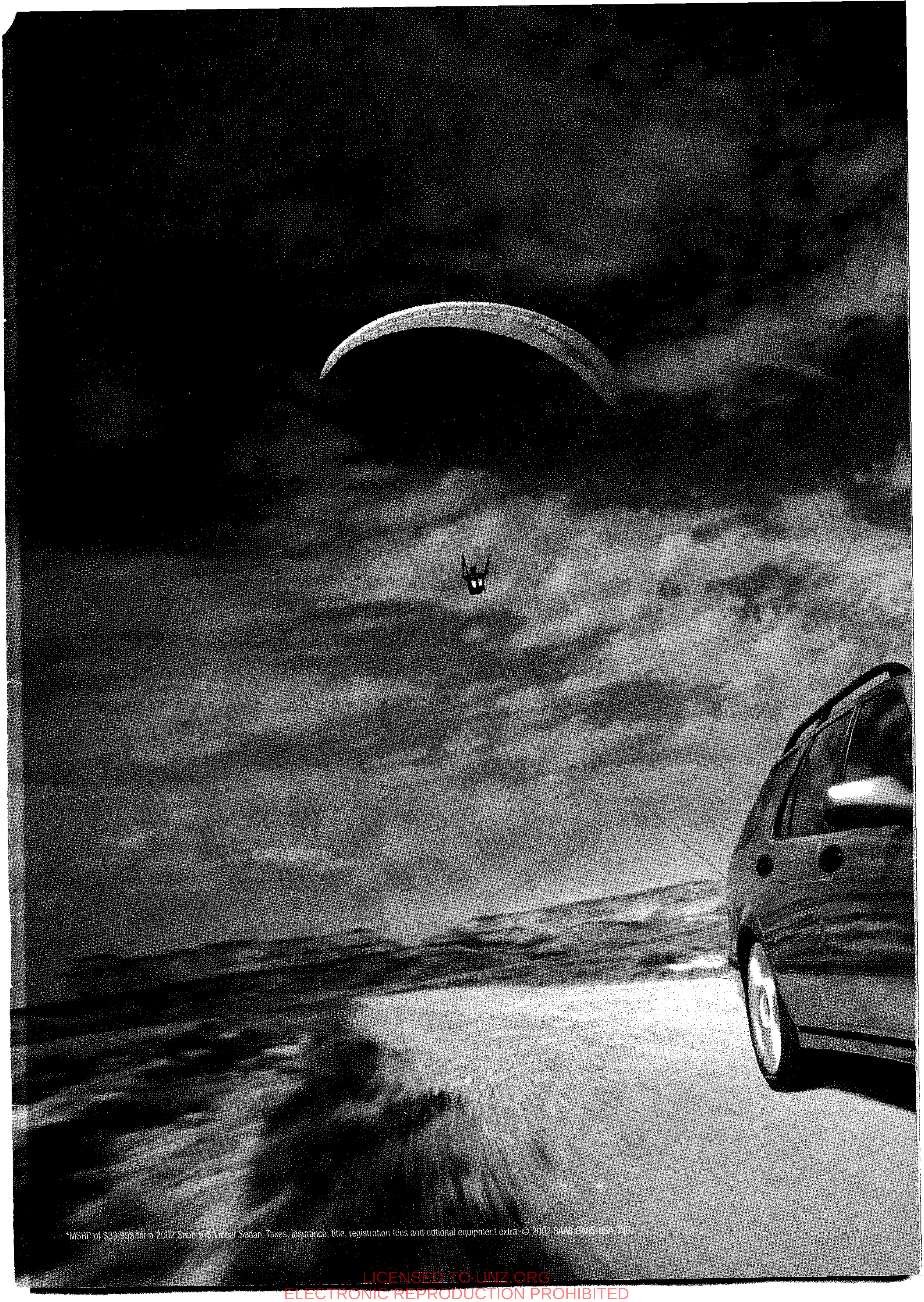
FEB. 11, 2002



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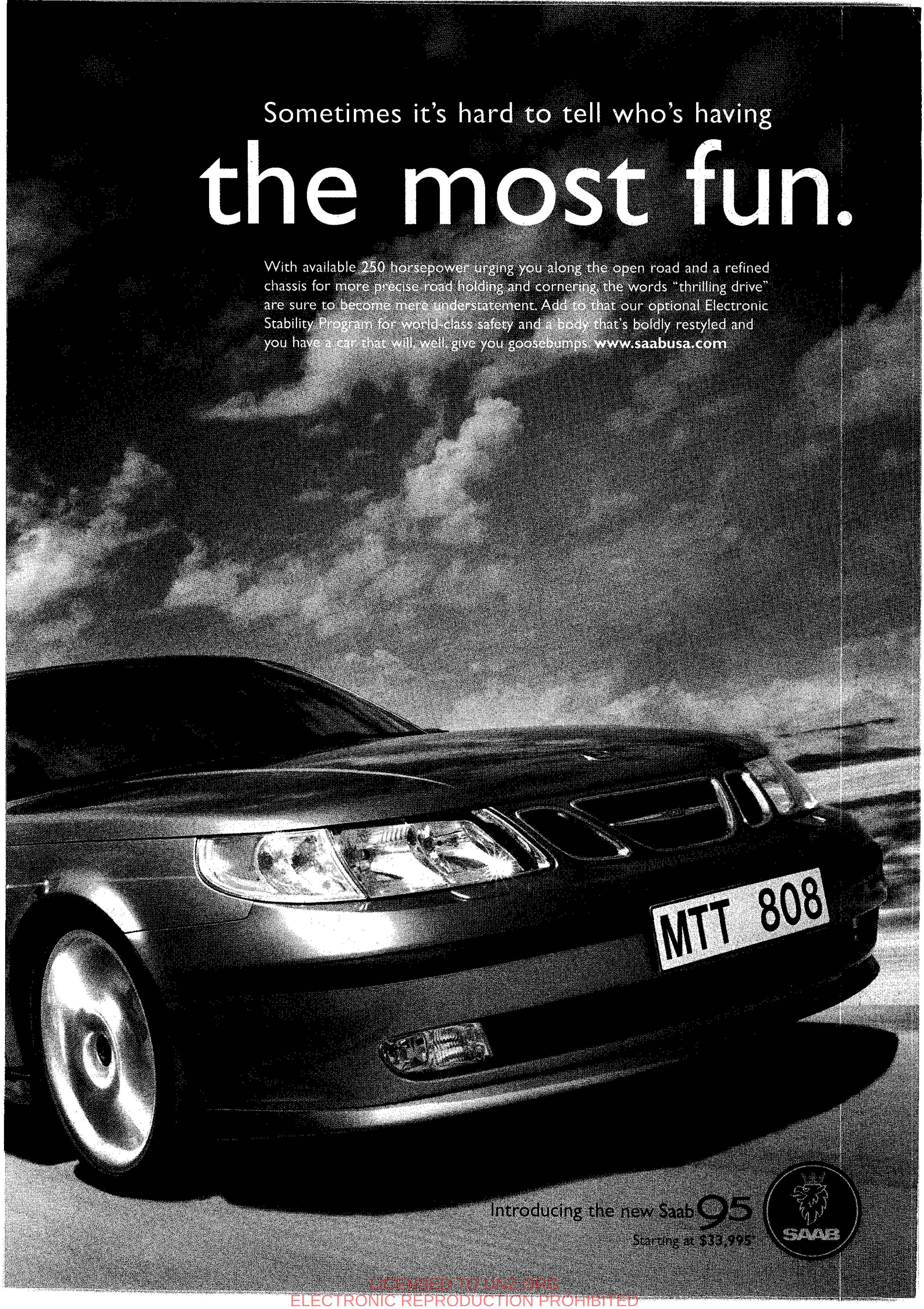

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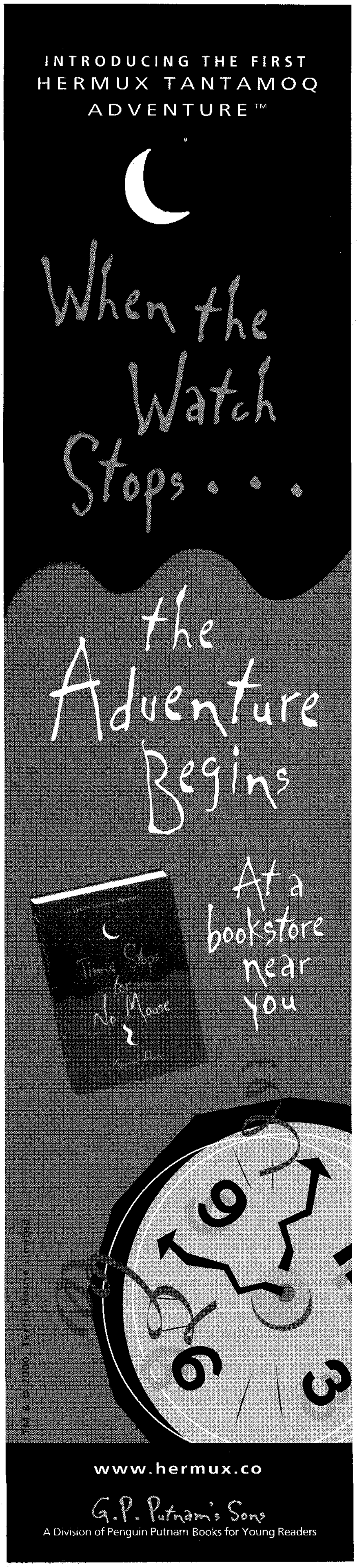
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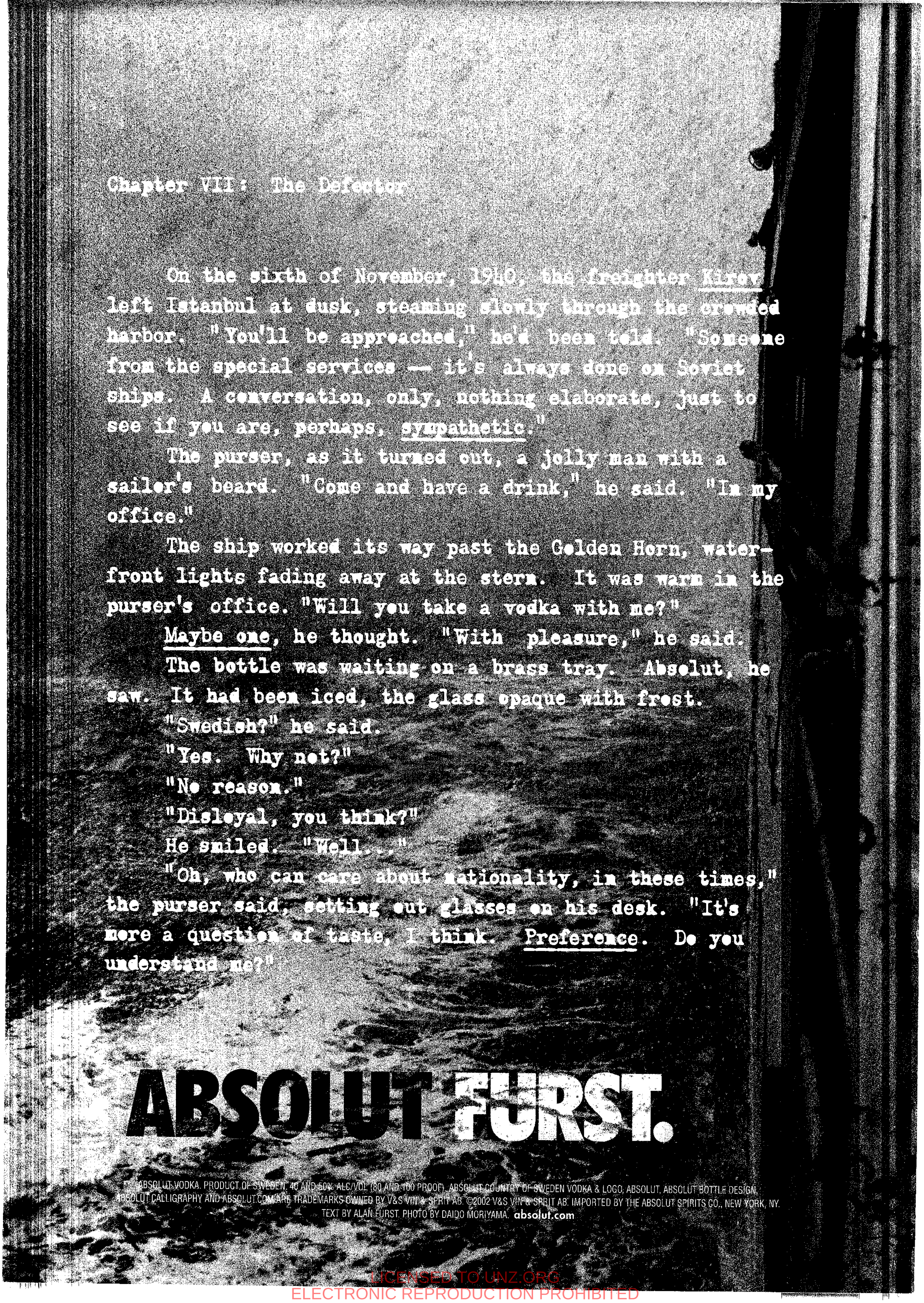

Chapter VII: The Defector

On the sixth of November, 1940, the freighter *Kirov* left Istanbul at dusk, steaming slowly through the crowded harbor. "You'll be approached," he'd been told. "Someone from the special services — it's always done on Soviet ships. A conversation, only, nothing elaborate, just to see if you are, perhaps, *sympathetic*."

The purser, as it turned out, a jolly man with a sailor's beard. "Come and have a drink," he said. "In my office."

The ship worked its way past the Golden Horn, waterfront lights fading away at the stern. It was warm in the purser's office. "Will you take a vodka with me?"

Maybe one, he thought. "With pleasure," he said.

The bottle was waiting on a brass tray. Absolut, he saw. It had been iced, the glass opaque with frost.

"Swedish?" he said.

"Yes. Why not?"

"No reason."

"Disloyal, you think?"

He smiled. "Well..."

"Oh, who can care about nationality, in these times," the purser said, setting out glasses on his desk. "It's more a question of taste, I think. *Preference*. Do you understand me?"

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CONTRIBUTORS

Jane Kramer ("Private Lives," p. 36) writes the Letter from Europe for the magazine. Her new book, "Lone Patriot," will be published in the spring.

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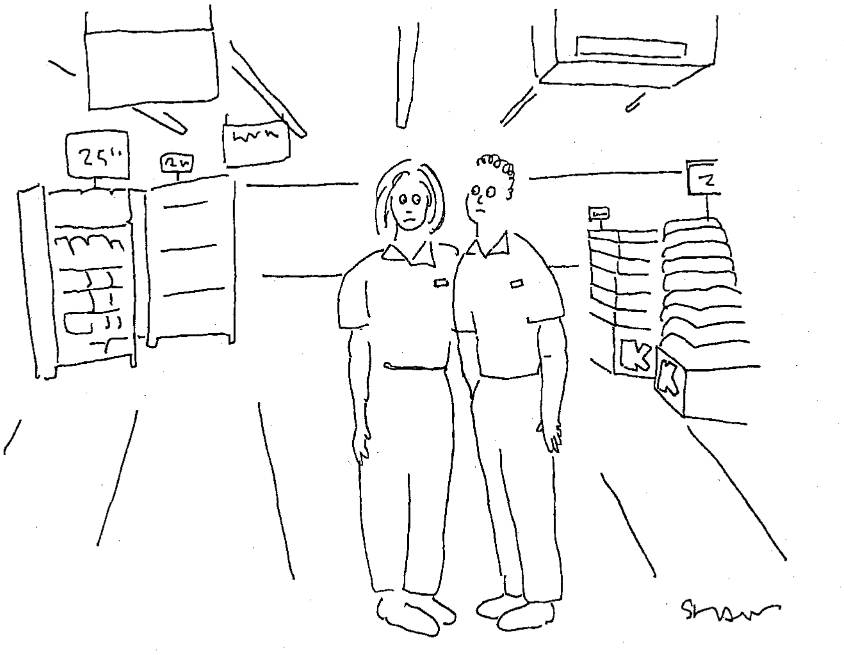
David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 92) is a film critic for the magazine. ♦



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THE MAIL

BACK TO IRAQ?

Seymour M. Hersh, in his article on the debate over military action in Iraq, quotes a member of the American defense establishment on the benefits of the relative stability that Saddam Hussein provides ("The Iraq Hawks," December 24th & 31st). This is nothing but a recipe for the continuation of a cynical, failed, and inhuman policy, especially since there is another, better model of stability in Iraq: Kurdistan, the Kurd-controlled region of Iraq, which Hersh mentions in passing. Thanks to the requirements of the United Nations' oil-for-food program, this region, with a population of nearly four million people, receives thirteen per cent of Iraq's oil revenues, and the help of U.N. agencies in spending it. As a result, there have been considerable improvements in education, health, and welfare. There are nearly two hundred print publications, with diverse political views, and several local television stations. In contrast to the miserable, totalitarian rule of Baghdad, the Kurdistan region's experience of self-governance could serve as a model for a future democratic Iraq—which is where America's long-term interest lies.

Howar Ziad
Representative, Kurdistan Regional Government
New York City

Hersh quotes a lot of tough talk from Washington's "Iraq hawks," but it is quite hard for Iraqis to believe that, this time, America is really serious. They remember that when Saddam gassed the city of Halabja, in 1988, killing some five thousand people, America basically turned a blind eye. They also remember March, 1991, when, in response to a call from George H.W. Bush, many of them rose up against Saddam, only to find that support from Washington did not materialize. The March, 1995, insurrection failed, again because the United States backed out when it mattered. The reality from the Iraqi point of view is this: as long as Saddam doesn't get in America's way, America has no objection to his brutality at home.

Sabah A. Salih
Danville, Pa.

MESSAGE IN A BUBBLE

Elizabeth Kolbert, in her account of the North Greenland Ice-core Project ("Ice Memory," January 7th), describes the drilling for glacier ice at Camp Century in the nineteen-sixties but not the serendipitous encounter that inspired it. In 1954, the Norwegian scientist Per Scholander took part in an oceanographic expedition in the waters off Labrador. One day, he asked the captain, "Why is the ice in the sea fizzing?" The captain explained that the fizzing came from air trapped in the glacial ice under falling snow long ago. (You can put a piece of this ice in Scotch and have a Scotch-and-soda.) Scholander said, "I can measure this air." He wasn't a glaciologist but a physiologist, and, while studying the gasses that codfish produce in their swim bladders, he had developed a gas microanalyzer. (Scholander's imaginative approach also led to insights into how dolphins ride the bow waves of ships, and why sap rises as high as it does in trees.) With it, he realized, he could determine the amount of carbon dioxide in a tiny sample of trapped air, to study the ancient atmosphere. Before long, Scholander, with Willi Dansgaard and others, did just that, and even used carbon dating to learn the age of the gas. Camp Century was a direct outcome of their work, proof of how the porous nature of the boundaries between scientific fields can benefit research, and help us to understand our world.

S. A. Morse
Research Professor of Geosciences
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Mass.

•

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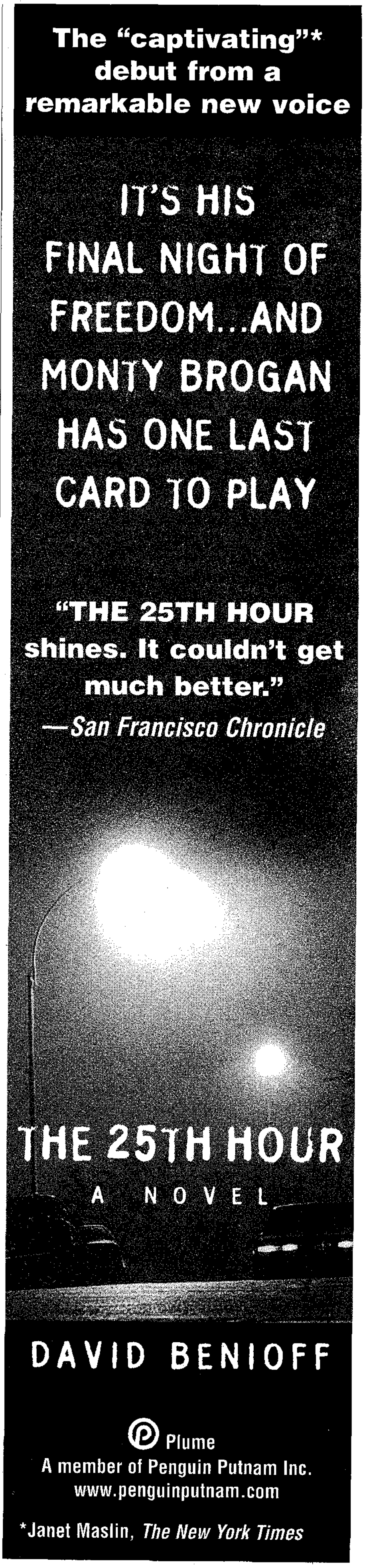
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*Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AN ALMOST HOLY PICTURE
Kevin Bacon stars in a drama by Heather McDonald, in which a church groundskeeper hears the call of God but can't figure out what he is saying. Michael Mayer is the director. Two previews on Feb. 6. Opens Feb. 7 at 7. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

BEA ARTHUR ON BROADWAY:
JUST BETWEEN FRIENDS
The stage and screen star performs songs and reminisces about her six-decade career, accompanied by the pianist Billy Goldenberg. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

CARNIVAL
City Center's Encores! series kicks off its ninth season with a concert staging of Bob Merrill and Michael Stewart's 1961 musical, under the direction of Kathleen Marshall. Five performances only: Feb. 7-8 at 8, Feb. 9 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 10 at 6:30. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

ELAINE STRITCH AT LIBERTY
The Broadway star's hit one-woman show, which ran last fall at the Public Theatre, transfers to the Neil Simon Theatre. Co-created with the *New Yorker* theatre critic John Lahr and directed by George C. Wolfe. Previews begin Feb. 6. (250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

FOOL FOR LOVE
A 29th Street Rep staging of Sam Shepard's 1984 play. In previews. (212 W. 29th St. 206-1515.)

FOUR
The Worth Street Theatre Company and Manhattan Theatre Club's production of a drama by Christopher Shinn, which examines the interconnected relationships between four people on a single day—the Fourth of July, 1996—in Hartford, Connecticut. Jeff Cohen is the director. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

LAPIS BLUE BLOOD RED
Cathy Caplan's drama about the life of the Italian baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi, based in part on her letters and the court transcripts from the trial of a man accused of raping her and stealing one of her paintings. In previews through Feb. 10. Opens Feb. 11 at 8:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

THE MATCHMAKER
Anna Manahan and Des Keogh portray twenty different characters, in John B. Keane's play, set in rural western Ireland in the nineteen-fifties. In previews through Feb. 9. Opens Feb. 10 at 7. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			6	7	8	9
10	11	12				

OCCUPANT
Anne Bancroft returns to the stage to portray the painter Louise Nevelson, in a new drama by Edward Albee. Anthony Page is the director. In previews. (Signature, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

TO YOU, THE BIRDIE! (PHÈDRE)
Frances McDormand, Kate Valk, and Willem Dafoe lead the cast in the Wooster Group's latest work, based on Racine's "Phèdre." In previews. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St. Brooklyn. 966-3651.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE BRIDGE IN SCARSDALE
Jacques Lévy ("Oh! Calcutta!") is the director of a new play by Robert Remington Wood, about a bridge designer, his estranged painter wife, who has been institutionalized for twenty-five years, and their son, who reunites them. (Phil Bosakowski Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 279-4200. Closes Feb. 16.)

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Three actors perform thirty-seven plays and a hundred and fifty-four sonnets in under two hours. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

CYMBELINE
Theatre for a New Audience's staging of Shakespeare's play, directed by Bartlett Sher. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 24.)

DEAD TECH
Kristin Marting and Celise Kalke's adaptation of Ibsen's "The Master Builder" incorporates seminal architectural and technological literature. With music by Todd Griffin. (Puritan Iron Foundry, 56 Water St. Brooklyn. 212-647-0202.)

FINDER'S FEE
A play by Wesley Moore, about a real-estate deal gone bad. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 627-2556.)

FURTHER THAN THE FURTHEST THING
After a volcano erupts, an isolated island community is evacuated to an industrial town, in a drama by the Scottish playwright Zinnie Harris. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

THE GUYS
In Anne Nelson's play, an editor (Sigourney Weaver) helps a fire chief (Bill Irwin) write eulogies for the funerals of eight of his men killed in the September 11th attacks. Jim Simpson is the director. (The Flea, 41 White St. 226-2407.)

HOBSON'S CHOICE
Maggie Hobson, daughter of a Lancashire boot merchant, is a force to be reckoned with in Harold Brighouse's 1915 comedy, and Martha Plimpton inhabits her to her fingernails. Maggie perceives that the time is ripe for a personal economic, social, and sexual revolution, and perhaps Plimpton has recognized a similar opportunity for her craft and her career; she is the powerful engine driving this bright Atlantic Theatre Company production, directed by David Warren. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 10.)

HOMEBODY/KABUL
Tony Kushner's play, set in London and Afghanistan in 1998, concerns the necessity and the dangers of engagement with the world, and it is no surprise, really, that this most political of playwrights should have happened to be thinking for the last several years about matters that until recently did not engage most people in this country. The first act consists of an hour-long monologue by a middle-aged Englishwoman, memorably brought to life by Linda Emond, who is a lover of old books and lost causes—these she finds "irrelevant and irresistible," and part of what makes her words so riveting is that it's never entirely clear whether her attachment to the dustbin of history has more to do with history or with the dustbin. The character is a fascinating study in both isolation and passion. Her desire to act, to be part of history—to not remain "suspended in the Rhetorical Colloidal Forever that agglutinates between Might and Do"—leads her to Kabul, where she disappears. In a way, that's when the play disappears, too; it is at its most powerful before it ever leaves home. The subsequent three hours devolve into an unsatisfying tangle of themes and characters, but such is the strength of the first act—and of Emond's performance—that the sense that something important is at stake carries through. The cast of eleven is under the direction of Declan Donnellan. (Reviewed in our issue of 1/28/02.) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

MAMMA MIA!
This smorgasbord of song, the brainchild of Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, the male half of the seventies supergroup ABBA, is nothing but hokum—a chucklehead pleasure. Andersson and Ulvaeus have shrewdly allowed their platinum hits to be sent up by Catherine Johnson's book, which is simply a slick cartoon that connects the dots between the band's No. 1 singles. (11/5/01) (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.)

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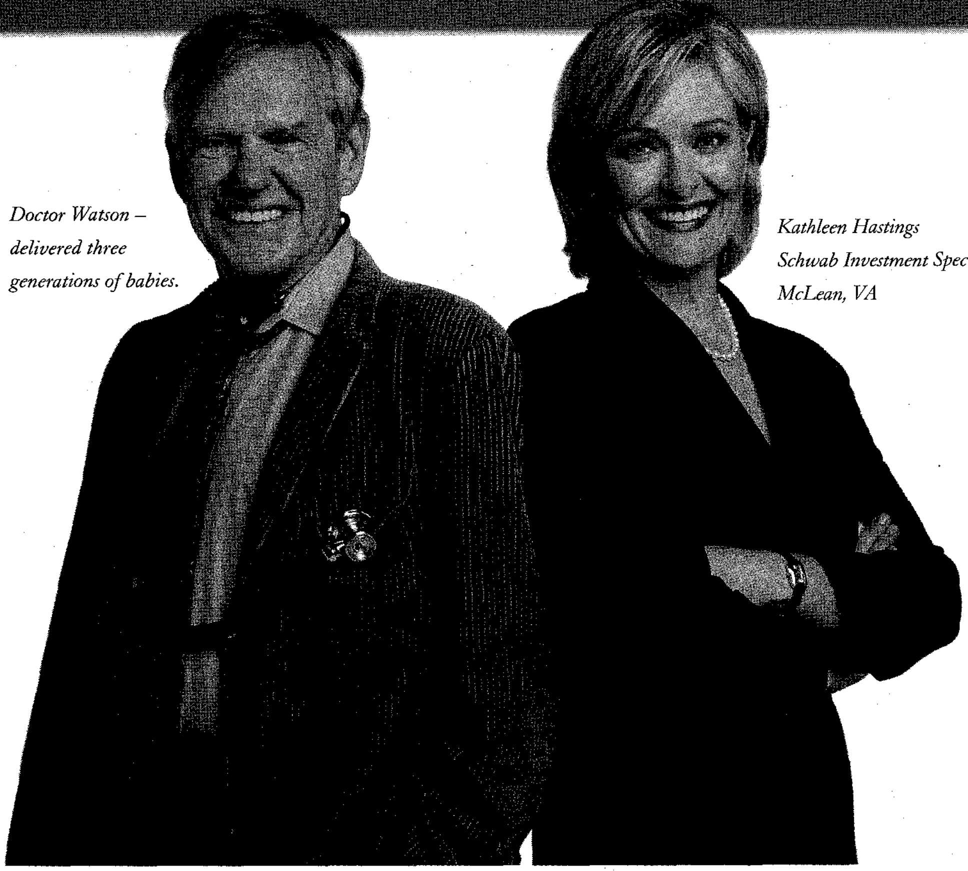

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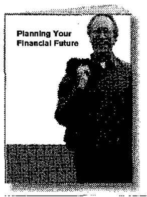

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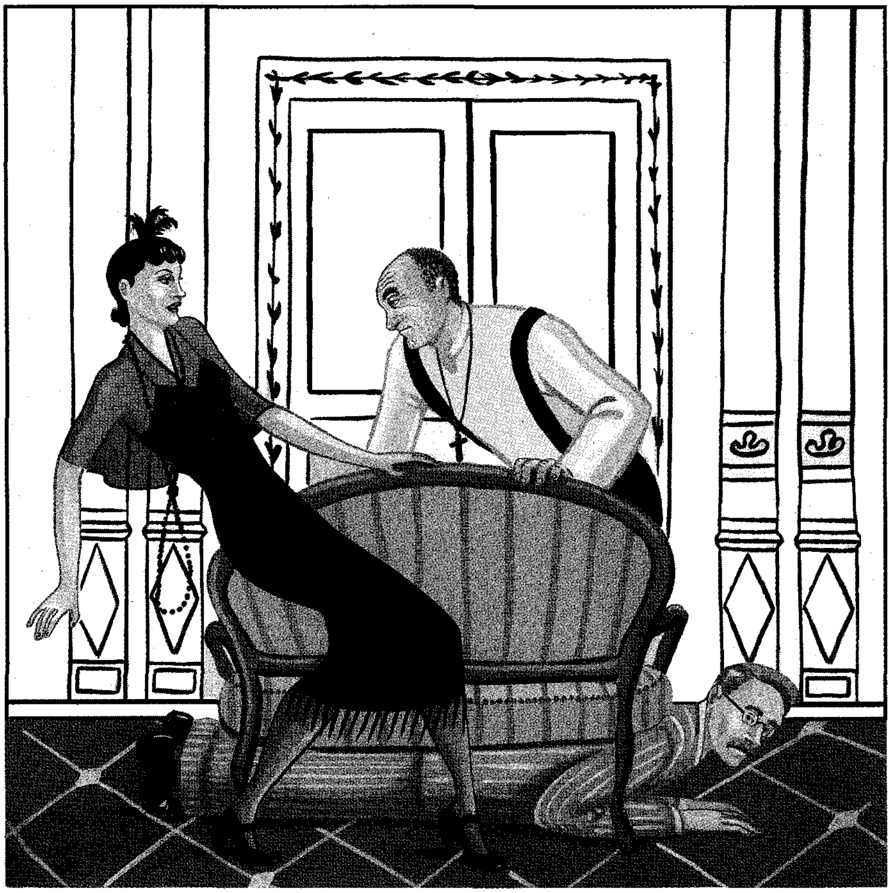
MARIA DEL BOSCO (SEX & RACING CARS: A SOUND OPERA)
The avant-garde playwright Richard Foreman's fiftieth play. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

MONSTER
Michael Greif ("Rent") is the director of a new play by Neal Bell, based on Mary Shelley's novel "Frankenstein." (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes Feb. 17.)

MOSTLY SONDHEIM
In her one-woman show, Barbara Cook performs songs by Stephen Sondheim, as well as songs by his favorite composers. Sundays and Mondays at 7:30, through Feb. 11. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)



The Worth Street Theatre Company's staging of "Tartuffe," by Molière.

ALLISON SIEFFER

NOISES OFF
Jeremy Sams's revival of Michael Frayn's 1982 backstage comedy, a farce within an antic farce, is blissful fun. As the dysfunctional troupe of the travelling show "Nothing On," all the members of the excellent cast—Patti LuPone, Peter Gallagher, Richard Easton, Faith Prince, Edward Hibbert, Katie Finneran, T. R. Knight, Thomas McCarthy, and Robin Weigert—shine in roles that lesser comedians would surely find daunting. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

ONE MAN
The British actor Steven Berkoff is in town for a seven-week engagement of his latest show, a trio of monologues: "The Tell-Tale Heart," adapted from Poe, and "Actor" and "Dog," which Mr. Berkoff wrote. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 253-9983.)

PERMANENT VISITOR
A two-month festival of plays about or by Dawn Powell, or based on her works. (78th Street Theatre, 236 W. 78th St. 206-1515.)

PETER AND WENDY
A Bunraku-puppet adaptation of J. M. Barrie's classic children's tale, from the experimental troupe Mabou Mines. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
It's one thing for a man to develop the ability to stretch his scrotum until it's the size of a dinner plate, but another to share this talent with the world. These two Australians, Simon Morley and David (Friendy) Friend, profess embarrassment at the success of their "little pub show," but it's still a con: fifteen minutes into their act they are utterly naked and out of ideas. They can't go on, but they do. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

THE RING: THE OPERATIC ERA LABORATORY
Target Margin Theatre presents five new plays examining Wagner's epic opera: "Ring Cycle," by the Rattazzi Brothers; "Siegfried's Nerve," adapted by Lucas Hnath; "Über," by Ethan Hein; "Boca," adapted by Yuri Skujins; and "Valkyrie; or, What Happens When a Good-Natured Goddess Goes Bad," by Aaron Tugendhaft, Susanna Gellert, and Chloe Johnston. (Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk Street. 358-3657. Closes Feb. 10.)

RUNT OF THE LITTER
The former Houston Oiler Bo Eason performs his semiautobiographical one-man show, about a small-town boy who makes it to the N.F.L. (MCC Theatre, 120 W. 28th St. 206-1515.)

SEXAHOLIX . . . A LOVE STORY
"A little coitus / Never hoit us," John Leguizamo jokes in his third one-man Broadway show, a crowd-pleasing hip-hop account of sexual escapades. Starting with the wacky impoverishment of his Colombian-Puerto Rican upbringing and ending with proud parenthood as the father of two "Jewricans," Leguizamo is noisy, funny, inventive, and sweet. He brings new sounds, new moves, and a new audience to the Great White Way. (He even dances in the aisles.) Next time, though, he'd do well to bring new material, too. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SORROWS & REJOICINGS
Judith Light, Charlayne Woodard, John Glover, and Marcy Harriell star in a new play by Athol Fugard, set in post-apartheid South Africa. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422. Closes Feb. 24.)

TARTUFFE
The Worth Street Theatre Company presents a new version of Molière's comedy, written and directed by Jeff Cohen. The cast includes Gerald Anthony, Crista Moore, and the playwright Keith Reddin. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 206-1515. Closes Feb. 16.)

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
This one-man show, written by Glen Berger and performed by David Chandler, manages to be both a funny tale of a Dutch librarian's midlife crisis and a serious, intriguing look at the value of any one life. After a book is returned to the library a hundred and thirteen years overdue, the librarian becomes obsessed with finding out how and why. He eventually comes to believe that the Wandering Jew was the errant borrower, whose late return of the volume is one of a series of clues he's left in a desperate attempt to document his existence. As billed, it's "An Impressive Presentation of Lovely Evidences." Directed by Randy White. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

URINETOWN
The amount of fun to be had at this musical, by Greg Kotis (book and lyrics) and Mark Hollmann (music and lyrics), is in direct proportion to the unpleasantness of its title. Its central idea is that an evil corporation controls all the toilets in a city that bears some resemblance to New York, but the show is really no more and no less than a terrifically spirited sendup of musicals and their conventions, as self-conscious and gag-happy as a Warner Bros. cartoon (not only does a sign saying "Secret Hideout" hang above a secret hideout; the sign has an arrow on it). (10/1/01) (Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Feb. 6 at 8: "Viva Verdi," "Hallelujah Junction," and "Variations Sérieuses." ♦ Feb. 7 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Moves," and "Morgen." ♦ Feb. 8

at 8: "Allegro Brillante," "Morgen," and "Serenade." ♦ Feb. 9 at 2: "Swan Lake" and "Variations Sérieuses." ♦ Feb. 9 at 8: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Romeo and Juliet," "Zakouski," and "Scotch Symphony." ♦ Feb. 10 at 3: "Ash," "Afternoon of a Faun," "A Suite of Dances," and "Scotch Symphony." ♦ Feb. 12 at 7:30: "Swan Lake," "Serenade," and "Theme and Variations." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570. Through Feb. 24.)

BUGLISI/FOREMAN DANCE

The former Martha Graham dancers Jacqulyn Buglisi and Donlin Foreman offer works in the Graham tradition. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Feb. 5 at 7:30, Feb. 6-8 at 8, Feb. 9 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 10 at 2 and 7:30.)

"GLIMMER"

Lava, Sarah East Johnson's troupe of six women and a pair of twin girls, is no more risk-addicted than the next set of circus acrobats, but they *are* more likely to reveal the anatomy of that risk: when one woman tumbles down another's upright body, she moves so slowly you have time to imagine her cracking open her head. For "Glimmer," Johnson has looked to American sports and recreation for ripe-for-disaster game plans: football, for example, where half the point is to undermine the other team's bone-cracking stratagems, or square dance, where a single misstep can ruin the whole exchange. "I find that so compelling!" she says. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Feb. 8 at 8 and Feb. 9 at 4 and 8. Through Feb. 16.)

"IT'S NOT YOU, IT'S ME"

Alexandra Beller used to perform with Bill T. Jones. Then she danced, very slowly, for the photographer Irving Penn. "He didn't talk all that much," she remembers about her four shoots with him. "But his eyes—the most piercing eyes I've seen—communicated." The results, "Dancer: 1999 Nudes by Irving Penn," currently hang at the Whitney. "The exposure has been a bit weird," Beller admits. "I've had people come up to me and say, 'Hey, didn't I see you naked somewhere?'" The dances at Joyce SoHo—a solo, a duet, and three group pieces—traffic in a different kind of nakedness. "The inspiration," she says, "is the hilarious and tragic things my friends and I have endured while dating and mating." (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 334-7479. Feb. 8-10 at 8.)

EMMANUELE VO-DINH

The choreographer presents "Texture/Composite," a quartet based on observations made at the neurology department of the University Hospital of Iowa City. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Feb. 7-10 at 8:30.)

"STRIKE ME LIGHTNING"

Sally Silvers & Dancers perform a piece that imagines a group of nuns who arrive at heaven's gate only to fall victim to a spell that makes them move like cyborgs. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Feb. 7-10 at 8:30.)

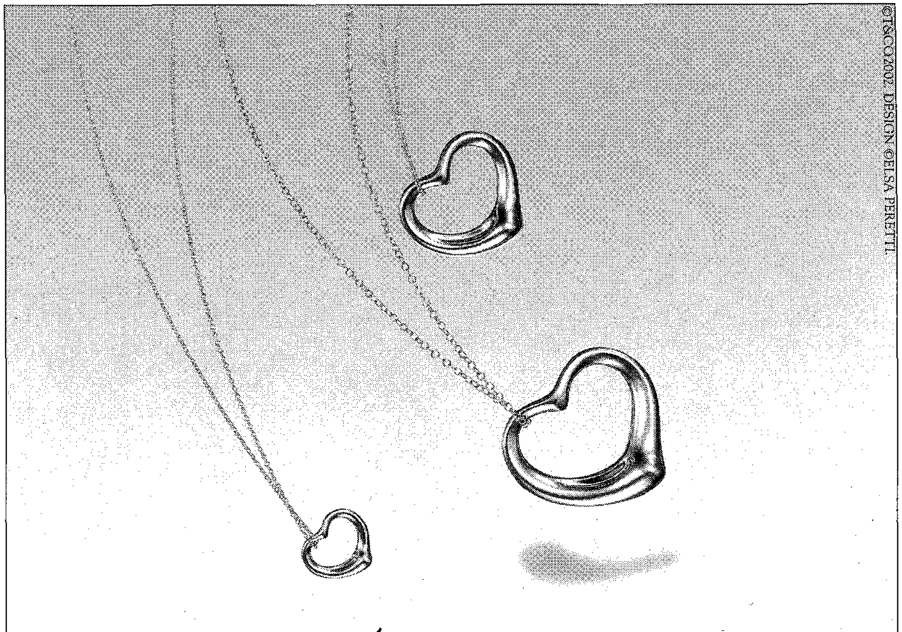
NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"NEW SOUNDS LIVE"

John Schaefer is the host of a program with the **Uri Caine Ensemble** and **Last Forever.** The pianist Caine, who loves linking classical music and jazz in wholly fresh, often outrageously creative ways, presents his Goldberg Variations. / Last Forever is the band assembled by the composer and arranger Dick Connette and the singer Sonya Cohen, who offer country music unlike anything else out there. Connette draws from many sources—from prison ballads to doo-wop ditties—and filters them through his own string-fed imagination (violins and cellos abound), proving just how big this country really is. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Feb. 7 at 8.)

"DUETS ON THE HUDSON"

The meeting of wind instruments and the cello isn't very common in jazz, but the first half of this bill—featuring **Akua Dixon** and the saxophonist and bass clarinettist **Chris Potter**—holds much promise. The master-mentor relationship between the saxophonist **Greg Osby** and his younger acolyte **Jason Moran** couldn't get any more telepathic in nature. The pianist Moran, whose "Black Stars" was among the



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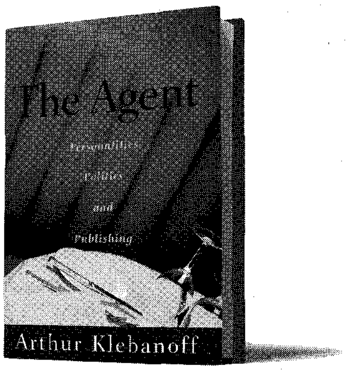


"The story behind the stories."
- Michael R. Bloomberg, New York City Mayor
"As many twists and tricks as any spy novel."
- Richard Reeves, author of *President Nixon*

TEXERE

most rewarding jazz recordings of last year, is fast gaining on Osby as one of the more provocative thinkers on the current scene; together they find the least predictable ways to escape from the musical corners they purposely back themselves into. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 721-6500. Feb. 7-8 at 8 and Feb. 9 at 9.)

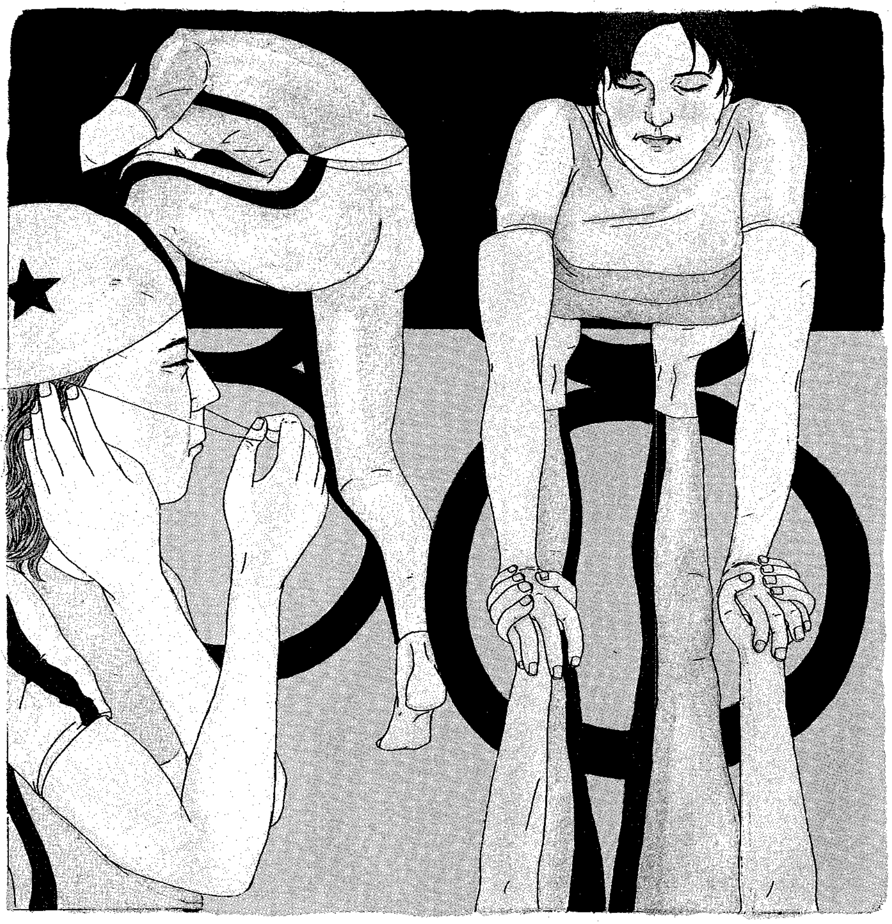
LINKIN PARK
The user-friendly face of rap-rock, California's youthful Linkin Park scored big last year with their début disk, "Hybrid Theory." The record boasted all the rage of Limp Bizkit and Korn, though without the former's profanity and the latter's self-loathing. The members of Linkin Park may have surrendered their authenticity by jettisoning the specifics of their angst, but they more than conquered the charts. Sharing the bill is **Cypress Hill.** The cannabis-friendly Los Angeles-based hip-hop act continues its foray into rock with "Stoned Raiders." (Nassau Coliseum. 212-307-7171. Feb. 8 at 7:30.)

KHALED
This policeman's son who is known as the king of *raï* left his native Algeria in 1986 to live in France, where he was relatively free to produce the lyrically forward ("Hey, Mama, your daughter wants me") take on the funky pop music of his homeland. With the Egyptian superstar Hakim. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Feb. 8 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
The Spanish guitarist Vicente Amigo closes out the Institute's second annual New York Flamenco Festival. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Feb. 9 at 8.)

C. J. CHENIER
The son of the legendary zydeco accordionist Clifton Chenier stops by with his Red Hot Louisiana Band. (Hungarian House, 213 E. 82nd St. Feb. 10 at 7:30. For more information, call 685-7597.)

KEOLA BEAMER AND OZZIE KOTANI
An evening of Hawaiian slack-key guitar. With George Kahumoku. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Feb. 11 at 8.)



Sarah East Johnson's troupe Lava in "Glimmer," at the Kitchen.

LARA TOMLIN

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Feb. 7: The music of **Bo Diddley**—a founding father of rock and roll—gets tougher, louder, and wiser the older he gets. And he does it all with a rectangular guitar.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Feb. 11: **Kasey Chambers,** Australia's top female country vocalist, continues her assault on the United States. Chambers has an A.M.-radio-ready voice so country-esque it sometimes seems manufactured, a dirt-under-the fingernails toughness, and a body to put Britney Spears to shame: only a fool would bet against the singer, who is out supporting her second Stateside album, "Barricades & Brickwalls." Feb. 12: **Ron Sexsmith** and **Jill Sobule** celebrate the Bottom Line's twenty-eighth anniversary.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Feb. 9 and Feb. 11: The **Breeders** are back to restore their good name. Spawned from the legendary alternative band the Pixies, the guitar-heavy foursome morphed from a side project of the bassist Kim Deal into a full-blown band thanks to the success of its 1993 album, "Last Splash." Following a flurry of infighting, additional side projects, and other shenanigans, the Breeders dropped out of sight for the remainder of the last decade. Deal recently reunited with her sister, Kelley, and completed a new record, with the lauded producer Steve Albini, which is due out this spring.

BROWNIES
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Feb. 6: The downtown New York City power trio **Shelby** cranks out snappy pop songs that address such timeless subjects as lost love, desire, and the whereabouts of Loudon Wainwright. Feb. 9: **Hot Socky,** an amusing band led by the former Thin Lizard Dawn singer Greg Lattimer.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Feb. 9: **Carol Lipnik and Spookarama.** Lipnik, a singer with a five-octave range, performs rollicking original music rooted in the carny atmosphere of Coney Island. With **Gloria Deluxe.** Led by Cynthia Hopkins, this local outfit specializes in theatrical renditions of old-fashioned blues and country. Feb. 12: **Neil Halstead,** the understated vocalist behind the romantic English folk-pop group Mojave 3, offers songs from his new solo release, "Sleeping on Roads." The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

K.G.B.
85 E. 4th St. (505-3360)—Feb. 8-9: **One Ring Zero.** The circuslike name of this encouragingly odd local band is apt. Accordions, organs, theremins, and the occasional brass horn and homemade instrument combine to make soundscapes that are both haunting and entertaining. Credit goes to the principal members, Michael Hearst and Joshua Camp, who first met as music-composition students in Virginia a few years ago.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—The club continues its monthlong fifteenth-anniversary celebration. Feb. 9: The **Captain Beefheart Project.** The guitarist and onetime Beefheart co-conspirator Gary Lucas (a veteran of the early eighties' "Ice Cream for Crow" years) and Phillip Johnston, the avant-garde jazzman and arranger, lead a seven-piece instrumental band on a mission to reinterpret the Captain's compositions. Feb. 12: Having long found more favor with critics and fellow-musicians than with the ever-fickle record-buying public, the progressive-metal trio **King's X** continues to endure cult status.

RODEO BAR
375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—Feb. 8: The **Niagaras.** Seemingly forever at odds with the fleeting sound of the times, these longtime local favorites remain committed to sharp-dressed showmanship and sharp-witted pop. Feb. 9-10: **Wayne (the Train) Hancock** sings nostalgia-free country and honky-tonk songs about drinking, running from the law, and breaking hearts.

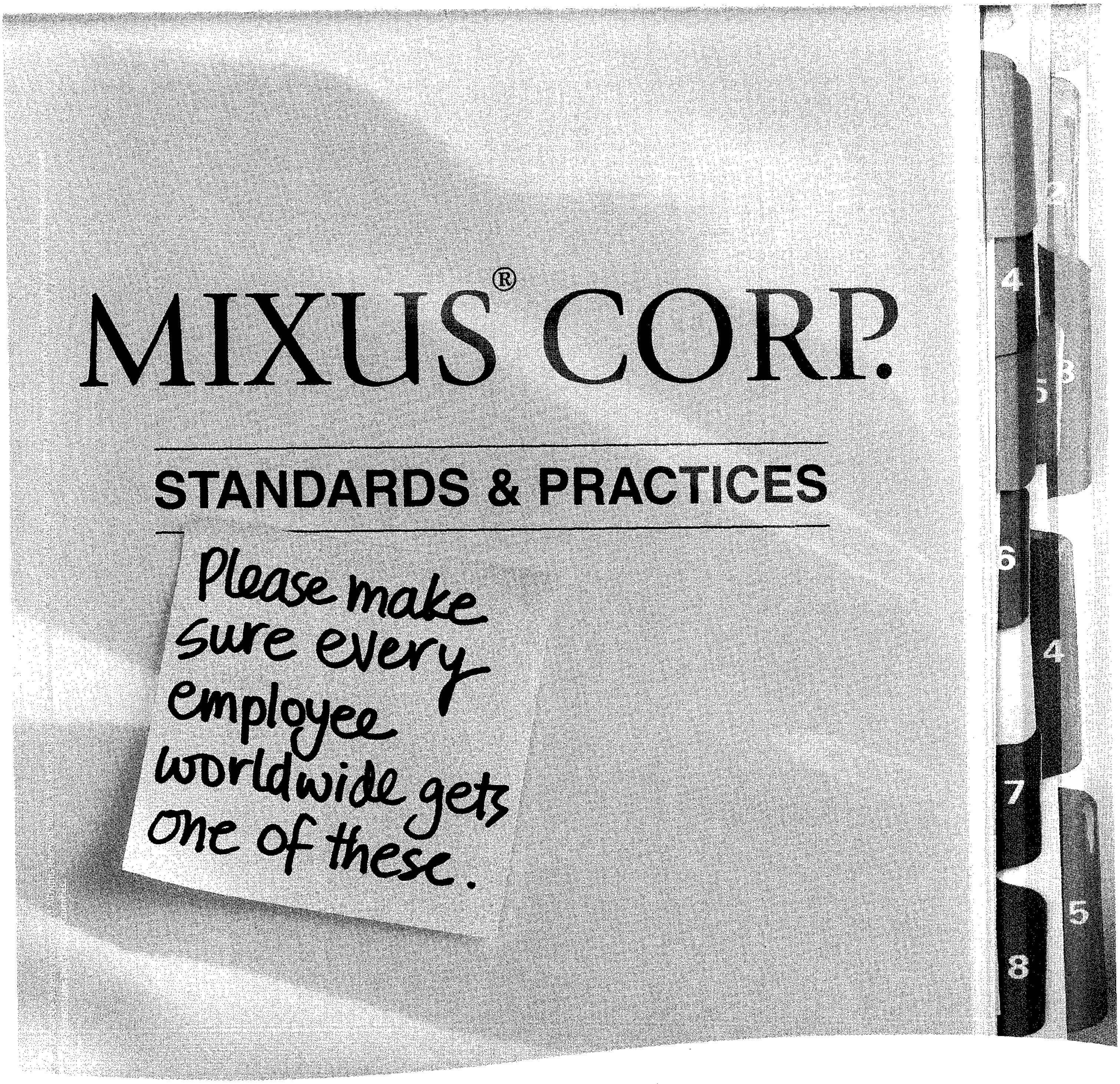
JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Feb. 7-9: The **Joe Chambers** quartet. As a sly, spiky drummer and an inventive composer, Chambers popped up on more than a few of the epochal Blue Note recordings of the nineteen-sixties, yet he never cut his own album for that now classic label. Alternating between piano and drums when he finally began leading his own sessions didn't help Chambers establish a firm public identity, and he quietly fell into the role of the vigorous sideman with an unheralded past. He's still a mesmerizing player, though, who brings an adventurous spirit to the bandstand. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Feb. 10: The **James Moody** quartet. Moody, a twisted sax and flute virtuoso with unblemished bop credentials, spikes his harmonically dense excursions with right-side-of-the-brain humor. His guest for this run is the vocalist **Marlena Shaw.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through Feb. 16: **Steve Tyrell** has made the kind of midlife career change that most of us can only dream about. After years behind the scenes as a successful composer and producer, Tyrell reinvented himself as a jazzy crooner. The endearingly gruff-voiced singer has sterling taste in repertoire and jazz sidemen and the album sales to prove that this has all been more than a vanity project.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Feb. 10: The **Ron Carter** quartet. Modern acoustic bassists everywhere can thank Carter for putting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their instrument on the map. After high-profile experience that found him playing, either live or in the studio, with practically every major jazz figure of the past forty years, Carter is now as recognizable a name as the giants he's worked for. With the **Mike Stern** quartet. Like far too many contemporary jazz guitarists, Stern has a bad case of run-on fingers, but his silken tone and flair for authentic bebop phrasing lift him above the fray. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Feb. 10: The **Mulgrew Miller** trio. Miller is a product of Memphis, a town whose jazz pianists invariably fall under the looming shadow of the florid legend Phineas Newborn. Miller, who tested his mettle with Art Blakey in the eighties, can be loquacious, but his orations have eloquence and verve. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

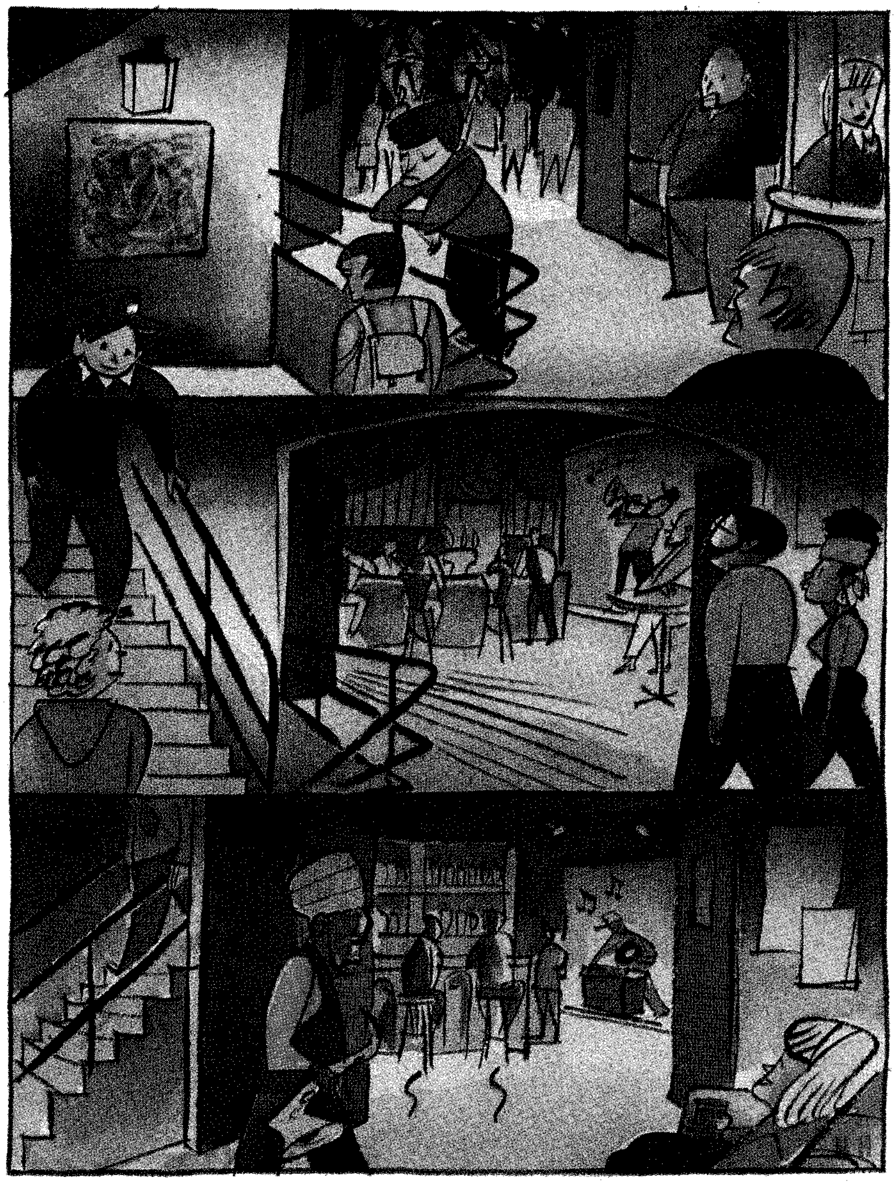
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Surrealism: Desire Unbound"** presents works by Miró, Ernst, Dali, Giacometti, and Man Ray, among others. Through May 5. ♦ **"Earthly Bodies: Irving Penn's Nudes, 1949-50."** In 1949, soon after making a name for himself as a fashion photographer, Irving Penn began a sort of antifashion project. For two years, in his off-hours, he took close-up photographs of undressed, ample women. Cropped at the knees and armpits, the resulting torso-scapes are both voluptuous and spare. Some of the sixty prints on view could almost be mistaken for charcoal drawings: a whiplash line carves its way through an expanse of brilliant white paper and—presto!—summons up Willendorfian forms. Through April 21. ♦ If you find yourself hankering for a glimpse of piggeries, fold yards, church oaks, and hedgerows, a walk through **"Benjamin Brecknell: Rural England Through a Victorian Lens"** offers the equivalent of a picnic in a vanished countryside. Like most of the early photographers, Brecknell was a dedicated gentleman amateur. Setting up his enormous equipment and waiting patiently through half-hour exposure times, he recorded the farm buildings of his own country estate in Worcestershire, along with the occasional ruined castle or abbey. The results are lovably unspectacular—records of an ageless English landscape that seems to come straight out of "The Wind in the Willows" or Beatrix Potter. Through April 21. ♦ **"Splendid Isolation: Art of Easter Island."** Through Aug. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The artist Ricci Albenda converts the lower level of the museum into three corridors, toying with perspective and playing spatial games in the gray area between architecture and sculpture. The first, a trompe-l'oeil mural of a corridor, greets viewers as they ride down the escalator. Around the corner, viewers find an actual corridor, the mirror image of the hallway depicted in the mural. A little further on, Albenda presents a shallow relief of the same image. Through May 21. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People."** Through March 3. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Paul Pfeiffer ends his yearlong stint as the museum's artist-in-residence with a pair of new digital projects. The stronger of the two is a staccato loop depicting a melee on the basketball court after the Chicago Bulls' championship victory in 1996. The fluster of black hands frantically stroking a white-clad back looks simultaneously like an orgy and a mugging. The loop runs on the diminutive screen of a video camera, installed on a pedestal inside a glass vitrine. Though no doubt intended to underscore the fetishism of technology, it dilutes the impact of the image itself. Through Feb. 24. ♦ **"Dancer: 1999 Nudes by Irving Penn."** Through May 12. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT PHILIP MORRIS
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (878-2550)—With little more than pipe cleaners and plastic chains the artist Lucky DeBellevue transforms the atrium of Philip Morris into a mystical den. (The show was inspired in part by Khlysty, an occult Russian sect that counted Rasputin among its faithful.) A web of metallic gold thread is strung across the ceiling like a rag-district version of the Milky Way while a tentlike form in a starry-sky-blue palette graces the Forty-second Street entrance. At the far end of the atrium, in the café, a woven mass of pipe cleaners hangs over diners like a forest canopy. Through April 5. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)



DOWNTOWN INDUSTRY *The Knitting Factory celebrates fifteen years of avant-garde music with a monthlong program that includes a tribute to Don Van Vliet, the seminal pop innovator otherwise known as Captain Beefheart (see Night Life—Clubs).*

MARCELLUS HALL

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum."** Through Feb. 24. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (864-4500)—Upon entering a room full of headless mannequins in Victorian costumes sewn from brightly colored African fabric, viewers may ask if the Studio Museum has launched a cross-cultural costume institute. But the London-born, Nigerian-raised artist Yinka Shonibare is less interested in seams and hems than in revealing the complexities of cultural identity. (The fabric, though African in design, was manufactured in the Netherlands for export to Great Britain). Elsewhere, he skewers British class obsessions and racial tensions in a series of photographic tableaux (they suggest film stills) in which he stars as a dandy in a pink waistcoat, like the lone black actor in a Merchant Ivory production of "A Rake's Progress." Through March 31. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 6; Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

EMILY CHENG
Veils of paint swag and drape these unabashedly decorative paintings and works on paper. Cheng takes her patterns from all over: mandalas, doilies,

porcelain patterns (the Wedgewood blue-and-white of "Prussian Bloom"), and ancient Chinese hair styles (the striated shapes floating in "Inner Court"). The five largest paintings take the form of targets, and the brushwork of the concentric fields evokes Kenneth Noland, even when the bull's-eye turns out to be a portrait of a cabbage. Through Feb. 23. (Winston Wachter Mayer, 39 E. 78th St. 327-2526.)

Short List

DAN GRAHAM
Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.
Through Feb. 9.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

GREG BOGIN
Bogin revives sixties-style supergraphic imagery in dead flat acrylic and enamel on suavely shaped canvases—and in polished aluminum and plush purple carpet on a large, blocky sculpture. The logo-like designs are eccentric and bland. Colors (one per work) run to mannerly green, pink, and coral. Distantly redolent of Art Deco, Bogin's art has a sturdy architectural presence and a forthright, optimistic air. Worrying about anything at this show is out of the question. Through March 2. (Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 752-2929.)

CHARLES AND RAY EAMES
The short, lovely 16-mm. film "Blacktop" was made by the great design couple in 1952. It orchestrates close-up shots of water, often soapy, flowing across an asphalt playground to a harpsichord accompaniment of Bach's "Goldberg Variations." The period Zeitgeist was Abstract Expressionism by mechanical means, as in Aaron Siskind's well-known photographs of decrepit walls. But the endlessly surprising beauties of this rediscovered gem (projected in digital video this time out) sell, as if to doubters, the spiritual advantages of awareness. Through Feb. 9. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

CLAY KETTER
Anyone who's seen a renovation in progress knows that the demolition stage is the most beautiful: on remaining walls, traces of old appliances, shelves, and moldings create ghostly, Mondrianesque compositions. Ketter has turned this effect into a career. Instead of oil paint and canvas, he uses contractors' supplies: ordinary wallboard, house paint, and siding, with screw anchors for color accents. At their most spare, the results are playfully evocative. More often though, they settle for a realist bleakness: Hopperville, here we come. Through Feb. 16. (Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 627-1018.)

JONATHAN MONK
Twee conceptualism, not unpleasant, by a Berlin-based Brit: slide projections, film, and animation, slipping in and out of legibility, of a photograph of Monk's mother; slides of verbal descriptions by his sister of family snapshots ("me and my dog Ben," "you wearing stupid glasses"); a jittery film animation of a Rubik's cube being solved. The content is nostalgia. The form is do-it-yourself. The significance is vanishingly slight. Through Feb. 9. (Casey Kaplan, 416 W. 14th St. 645-7335.)

CY TWOMBLY
"Lepanto," this ravishing suite of twelve large canvases in acrylic, crayon, and graphite, may be Twombly's most satisfactory work. The subject does it. On a sunny day in 1571, European ships led by Venice defeated a fleet of the previously invincible Ottoman Empire, with historical consequences that are newly acute today. Twombly painted his commemoration for last year's Venice Biennale. The public theme chastens his often solipsistic style, anchoring Twombly's excruciated scribbles and daubs in references to oared boats and martial fire. Delicate blues read as masses of indifferent air and sea. It's as if the great battle had waited centuries for the right poet of Mediterranean light and pathos. "Lepanto" is fierce art. Through Feb. 26. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.)

JIL WEINSTOCK / RICHARD KLEIN
A pair of found-object mavens. Weinstock encases feminine accessories (boas, beads, and, best of all, zippers) in sheets of brightly colored transparent rubber. The results are frivolously pleasing, like a cross between a vintage-clothing display and a Jell-O desert. Klein's work is less colorful but more luminous. Welding together scores of discarded eyeglasses, he builds Tiffany-like configurations that cast lovely, radiant light webs across the wall. Both artists set their sights on charm. Through Feb. 9. (Caren Golden, 526 W. 26th St. 727-8304.)

"A NEW WORLD TRADE CENTER"
In the aftermath of September 11th, Max Protech, an art dealer who specializes in architectural drawings, sent out the call for proposals for what to do with the devastated World Trade Center site. The resulting exhibition—packed with drawings, models and even a set of plastic building blocks—feels more civic-minded than curatorial; the sheer volume of material overwhelms individual efforts. Solutions range from Mel Chin's pointedly modest proposal for a low-rise, multi-use development to Jakob MacFarlane's curvilinear spires (they look like blades of grass) with L.E.D. signage that infinitely repeats the word "memory." Through Feb. 16. (511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999.)

Short List

CARLOS BETANCOURT / MONICA CASTILLO
Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 366-4774.
Through Feb. 9.

ANDREA FRASER
Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 680-9467.
Through Feb. 9.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

IDA APPLEBROOG
Four years ago, Applebroog abandoned smaller works in favor of these outsized "Modern Olympias," nudes of various shapes and ages, some alone, others endlessly duplicated, a few tangled up with one another. One triptych offers a youth on her knees, a heavy figure in a spiked collar, and, in the center, a defiantly un-coy elderly woman wearing a diaper. The lanky, small-breasted, young models mugging in the next room are shown in shoes a size too big, as if to make clear that they are just playing dress-up. Through Feb. 9. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.)

"ALTERED"
Sam Kraus here applies her formula—"find, destroy, create, package"—to the technology of creativity: an electric typewriter and a tape recorder, torn up and packed in clear specimen jars and boxes. The act of dissection makes the bits and bolts seem as if they were once alive. In "A Shoe Is Born," it's footwear that we see coming to life. Glass jars hold scraps of distressed pumps which swarm, join, and grow in stages. They gain a sole at stage thirteen, an ankle strap at twenty-four, and a bow on top at twenty-seven. Through March 9. (Art in General, 79 Walker St. 219-0473.)

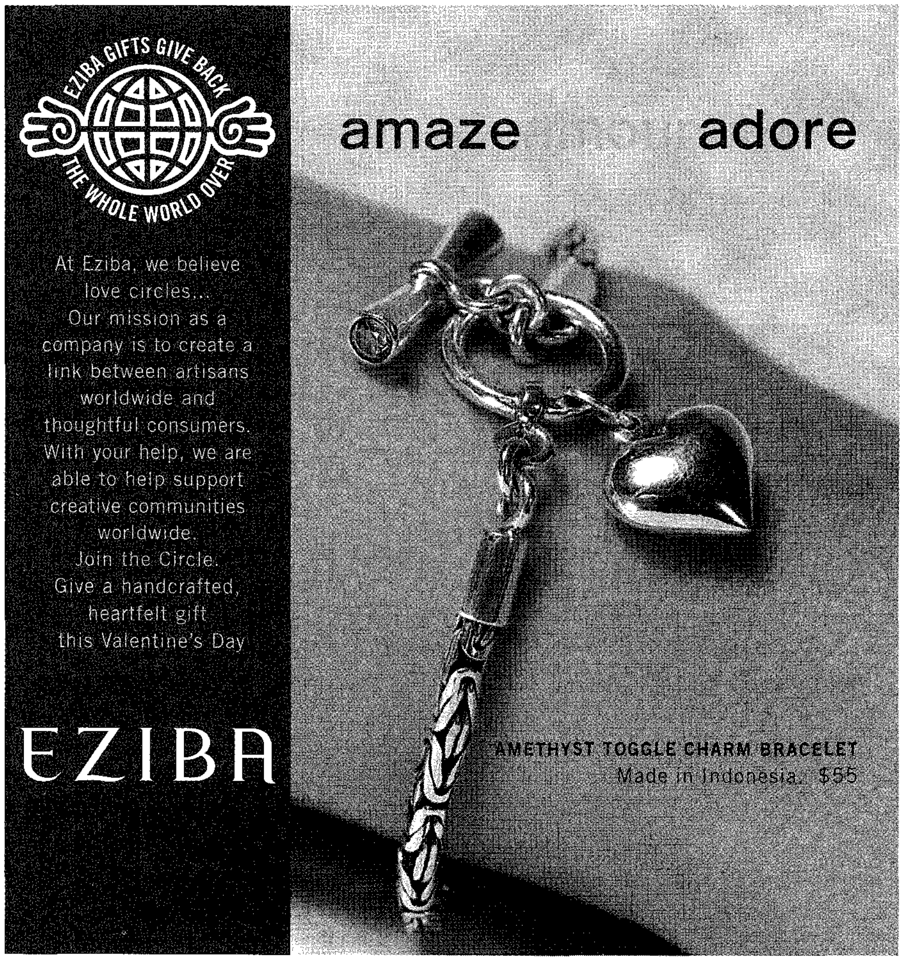
Short List

TIM HAWKINSON
Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.
Through March 30.

MARLENE MCCARTY
American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St., 941-0401, through Feb. 16; and Keenan, 3 Crosby St., 431-5083, through March 23.

PHOTOGRAPHY

EDWARD BURTYNSKY
The Canadian color photographer Edward Burtynsky is attracted to the sort of large-scale spectacles that have proved irresistible to photo-journalists for



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ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

From Russia with Love

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

Lots of people walk past **À LA VIEILLE RUSSIE**, in the Sherry-Netherland Hotel (781 Fifth Ave.; 752-1727), gazing at the Fabergé snuffboxes and Schlumberger clips in the window but never daring to cross the threshold. This is a shame, because once you're inside the place turns out to be a blast.

"The entrance is semi-formal for a reason," says the proprietor Peter Schaffer, who is wearing multicolored cabochon cufflinks and leaning over a desk that has a chart of Russian emperors under its glass. Schaffer's family founded the business in Kiev in 1851. "We have people—royals, celebrities—who come to us to escape from their bodyguards. They like to look around on their own, then slip out the back door." Big names have been shopping at A.L.V.R. since the beginning—Carl Fabergé himself was a client—but they're not the only customers: prices actually start at around $150, for a nineteenth-century cup and saucer, and from there, Schaffer says, "you just add zeros."

Even when the shop was in Kiev, it had a French name—at the time, the upper classes spoke French, and Russian was reserved for children and servants. The Francophile roots paid off in 1921, when the business decamped to Paris. Twenty years later, in the midst of another international crisis, Schaffer's parents arrived on Fifth Avenue. "My father brought Fabergé to this country," he says, though his stock is hardly limited to signed Russian pieces: a snarling mass of fifty-two gold-and-turquoise Victorian snakes that belonged to the Mexican actress María Félix recently graced the Fifty-ninth Street windows. "An incredible person, absolutely loved snakes," Schaffer says. "She and another snake collector, one of the Rothschilds, were always fighting over snake jewelry when it came up for sale. Diego Rivera once gave her two hundred and fifty live snakes for a wedding present, but she got rid of them—she said she didn't like to hear them eating."

Schaffer himself is no stranger to what he calls the illness of collecting—a British magazine once titled an article about him "Sick Schaffer"—and when asked what his favorite item at the moment is, his answer is surprising: it's Fabergé all right, but it isn't an enamel table clock or a tortoiseshell-and-diamond barrette. It's a sweet plain copper cooking pot. "I think it's hysterical!" Schaffer says. "People don't think of something like this as Fabergé, but I like it because it's not absolutely perfect. It's copper, brass, and pewter, and it was made to feign austerity. In 1914, during the Great War, aristocratic Russians at the front who needed something to cook with wrote home to Mama, and, well, she didn't know about Crate & Barrel. She went to Fabergé."

Schaffer says that the shop specializes in the "weird and unusual," then changes his mind a minute later about calling his inventory weird. Still, there's an insouciance not always in evidence in salons of this nature: a charm bracelet of mysterious provenance from the nineteen-thirties features the three little pigs, a house, and a wolf rendered in platinum, enamel, and diamonds. All this whimsy doesn't come cheap, but Schaffer is sure that the bracelet's $15,000 price tag won't deter a true addict.

"Years ago, we had as customers a couple," he says, "avid collectors who didn't trust the mails. Once a month they would come by with a payment. One day, the woman came in with a check, and our salesperson realized they didn't owe us any money. 'Oh, don't worry,' the woman said. 'We will.' "

—*Lynn Yaeger*

so long; the acres of discarded rubber tires in California or the "Mad Max"-like wastelands in Bangladesh, where dead cargo ships are cut to pieces by day laborers. The hyperclarity of the large prints, a testament to Burtynsky's technical ability, provides so much detail that the surfaces flirt with abstraction. It's easy to spot Pollock-like passages in the endless pattern of rubber circles and Ellsworth Kelly's harsh geometry in the metal bones of dismembered ships. Through March 2. (Cowles, 537 W. 24th St. 925-3500.)

VIKTOR KOLAR

The Czech photographer spent most of his life photographing (and occasionally working) in the streets, coal mines, and foundries of his native Ostrava, and he records the harshness of the life there with a street photographer's sense of improvisation and humor. In one image, a dismal, barren lot is decorated only by the two women moving through it: one wears a flower-print housedress and the other a polka-dot skirt. In another picture, a festive young couple dance by a soot-covered miner making his way home at the end of his shift. Through Feb. 23. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051.)

PAUL KOOIKER

These large shots, enigmatically titled "Hunting and Fishing," are of naked women—solid, curvy, with roiling curls of goddess hair. Mostly they dash through the woods and over sand dunes; a few stoop to inspect their toes. It's the kind of super-grainy, out-of-focus work that hurts your eyes at closer than six feet. The acid-flashback focus combines with the deliberately dated coloring to create the hazy aura of myth that you often catch when people of a certain age talk Woodstock. Through Feb. 16. (James Cohan, 41 W. 57th St. 755-7171.)

"DIEGO Y FRIDA"

Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo—more rebellious than Pollock and Krasner, louder than Stieglitz and O'Keeffe—rank high on the list of art history's power couples. Their story has all the elements of either a great novel or a *telenovela:* art, sex, success, revolution, tempestuous love. The photographs here, taken by such friends and acquaintances as Tina Modotti, Lola and Manuel Alvarez Bravo, and Lucien Bloch, provide a tender glimpse into what Kahlo's parents called a "marriage between an elephant and a dove." Through March 2. (Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—The photographs in **"Hidden Truths: Bloody Sunday 1972"** bear witness to the events of January 30, 1972, when the British Army killed thirteen Republican protesters and bystanders in Derry, Northern Ireland. Like the J.F.K. assassination, Bloody Sunday has spawned a field of study. A purportedly final government report on the subject failed to close the debate, and the snapshots shown here were among the evidence in a recent decision to reopen the inquiry. Viewers can come to their own conclusions about the deaths of Jackie Duddy (four photographs) and Barney McGuigan (two, and an image of a banner being dipped in a pool of blood after his body was removed). Through March 17. ♦ **"Another Vietnam: Pictures of the War from the Other Side"** and **"The First Snapshots,"** an exhibition of candids shot by amateur photographers in the eighteen-hundreds with the earliest Kodak cameras, both through March 17. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

ROBERT FRANK

Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 929-7000.
Through Feb. 25.

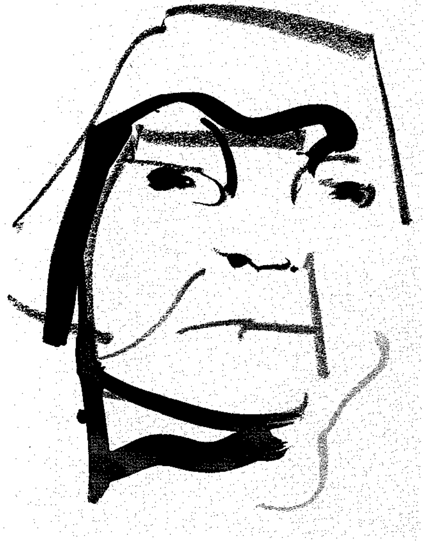
RICHARD ROTHMAN

Rodgers, 529 W. 20th St. 414-9810.
Through Feb. 16.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
Feb. 6 at 10 A.M. and 2: Shifting its focus after the closing of Christie's East, the house's Rockefeller Plaza division presents the second and final day of an inaugural "House Sale," a monthly event aimed at buyers looking for primarily decorative items. The wide range of porcelain, silver, rugs, paintings, European furniture, and other objects has been selected by the designer Jeffrey Bilhuber. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)



The quiet, hypnotic pull of Sofia Gubaidulina's music is the product of a jangle of clashing influences: the spiritual intensity of late-Soviet-era music, the mathematical mysticism of Bach, the folk instruments of her Tatar background. Continuum presents a concert in tribute to the Russian composer at Miller Theatre on February 12.

THOMAS LIBETTI

DOYLE
Feb. 6 at 10 A.M.: "Fine Furniture, Decorations, and Paintings," along with prints, porcelain, silver, and rugs. ♦ Feb. 12 at 1: "Dogs in Art," Doyle's annual tribute to man's best friend (timed to coincide with this year's Westminster Kennel Club show), featuring a variety of paintings, sculpture, furniture, and decorations, all with canine themes. Samuel Bough's painting "Family of King Charles Spaniels," from 1860 (estimated to bring up to forty thousand dollars), is a highlight of the sale. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN
Feb. 7 at 2:30: The first of two sales of vintage posters features commercial and travel prints from America and Europe. ♦ Feb. 7 at 6: A selection of artistic and commercial posters in the Art Nouveau style (including a range of works by Mucha) and skiing posters. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

WENDY NEW YORK ARMORY ANTIQUES SHOW
In the first show to be held in the 7th Regiment Armory since September 11th, a hundred international dealers present a broad selection of antique furniture, porcelain, paintings, jewelry, and more. (Park Ave. at 66th St. 472-1180. Feb. 6-10.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
"Il Barbiere di Siviglia," with Ruth Ann Swenson, Matthew Polenzani, Dwayne Croft, John Del Carlo, and Ferruccio Furlanetto; Yves Abel conducts. (Feb. 6 at 8.) ♦ With Juan Diego Flórez and Simone Alaimo replacing Polenzani and Furlanetto. (Feb. 9 at 8.) ♦ **"La Bohème,"** with Cristina Gallardo-Domas, Ainhoa Arteta, Ramón Vargas, and Bruno Caproni; Marco Armiliato. (Feb. 7 at 8.) ♦ **"Tosca,"** with Sylvie Valayre, Richard Leech, and James Morris; Daniel Oren. (Feb. 8 at 8.) ♦ With Cynthia Lawrence replacing Valayre. (Feb. 11 at 8.) ♦ The Met's revival of **"Le Nozze di Figaro,"** conducted by Donald Runnicles, is cause for joy. The concept behind Jonathan Miller's 1998 production, nimbly restaged by Robin Guarino, is essentially simple: make the characters seem in every way alive, and let Mozart's themes of class conflict and sexual indiscretion take care of themselves. Soile Isokoski, making her début, is a connoisseur's Countess, with the kind of voice we don't hear much anymore—a patrician, narrow-bore soprano reminiscent of Lisa Della Casa; her Count, Peter Mattei (in another début), is just as vivid and refined. The rest of the cast, all seasoned Mozarteans—including Furlanetto (in the title role), Korliss Uecker, Kristine Jepson, Wendy White, and Paul Plishka—revel in each other's company. (Feb. 9 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

AMATO OPERA
The chamber-opera company presents the first performances this season of "L'Elisir d'Amore." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Feb. 9 at 7 and Feb. 10 at 2:30.)

OPERA AT THE ASIA SOCIETY
Bun-Ching Lam's new chamber opera, "Wenji: Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute" (with a libretto by Xu Ying), relays the story of Cai Wenji, a statesman's daughter abducted by Mongol warriors during the years of the Han dynasty; the world-première production, featuring the Beijing Opera singer Zhou Long, is directed by the radical composer-dramatist Rinde Eckert. (Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742. Feb. 8-9 at 8.)

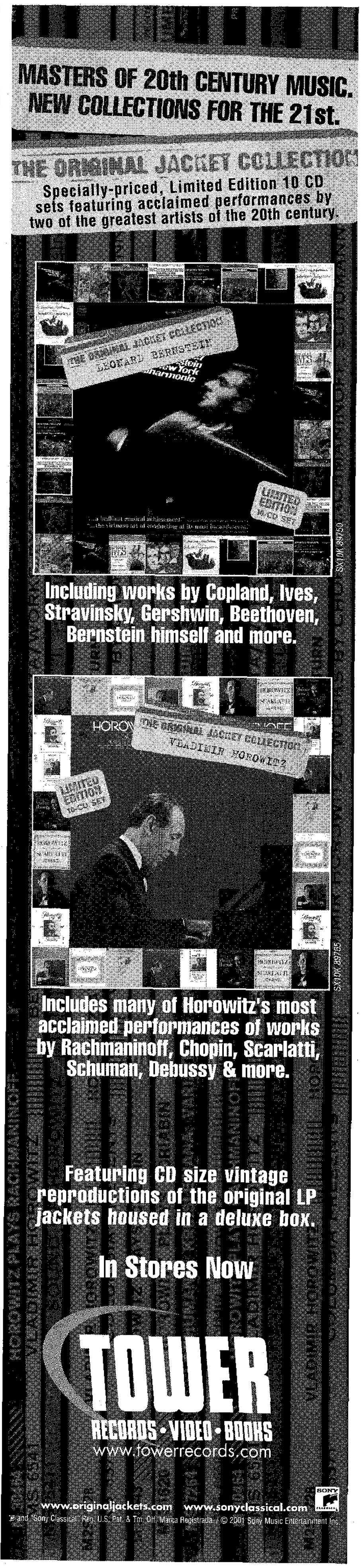
ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
In his first appearances after an extended medical leave, the orchestra's music director, Kurt Masur, conducts four concert performances of Act II of "Tristan und Isolde" (along with other selections from the opera), with Stig Andersen and Deborah Voigt singing the title roles. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Feb. 7, Feb. 9, and Feb. 14 at 8 and Feb. 12 at 7:30.)

ROYAL CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA
Riccardo Chailly leads the renowned Dutch orchestra in a performance of Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony, with the soprano Janice Watson, the mezzo-soprano Petra Lang, and the Westminster Choir. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 6 at 8.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S
Donald Runnicles takes time off from conducting Mozart's "Figaro" at the Met to make his first Carnegie Hall appearance as the chamber orchestra's principal conductor. A darker kind of Mozart lies at core of this program, the Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Minor, performed by Lars Vogt. The rest is Beethoven: the "Fidelio" Overture and the "Eroica." (247-7800. Feb. 7 at 8.)

NEW YORK COLLEGIUM
Will New York ever boast a front-rank early-music band? This fine Baroque orchestra and chorus, now in its fourth season, has made a bold move toward the limelight by appointing Andrew Parrott as its music director, a British conductor whose spirited longtime leadership of London's Tavener Choir Consort and Players has made him a leader in the field. His first program is an early-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Edward Burtynsky's "Shipbreaking #49, Chittagong, Bangladesh, 2001," at the Cowles gallery (see Photography).

music acid test: Bach's St. John Passion, performed with an ensemble of only eight singers. (Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, 869 Lexington Ave., at 66th St. 717-9246. Feb. 8 at 8.)

RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY
The brilliant pianist and new-music maven Christopher Taylor is at the center of the orchestra's latest concert: in addition to performing Bach's Piano Concerto No. 4 in A Major, he premières "Spherical Music," by Matthew Greenbaum, a work the composer orchestrated in emulation of Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C Major—which closes the program. George Rothman conducts. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Feb. 8 at 8.)

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Leonard Slatkin brought this resplendent Midwestern orchestra to greatness in the eighties, but since 1996 it has been lead by the Dutch conductor Hans Vonk, who has replaced Slatkin's eclectic fare with taut and streamlined readings of largely standard repertory. He brings the orchestra to Carnegie Hall with a program featuring Debussy's "La Mer," Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand (with Gary Graffman), and music by Rudolph Escher, one of the twentieth-century Dutch composers whom Vonk favors. (247-7800. Feb. 8 at 8.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
The mezzo-soprano Angelika Kirchschlager joins the orchestra in lieder by both Schubert and Wolf, in rarely performed orchestral arrangements (by Wolf, Reger, and Brahms); the program also features Schubert's Symphony No. 6 (the jaunty "Little C Major") and Wolf's "Italian Serenade." (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 9 at 8.)

CHORAL SYMPHONY SOCIETY
David Labovitz conducts the New York Cantata Singers in Bach's Mass in B Minor. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Feb. 10 at 3. Tickets at the door.)

RECITALS

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET
A commanding program from the most distinguished of quartets: Mozart, Carter (the scintillating Quartet No. 5), and Schubert (the Quartet No. 15 in G Major). (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 7 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

BARGEMUSIC
Feb. 7-8 at 7:30: Lieder by Haydn and Mendelssohn, two of the more gracious practitioners of the art of the song, adorn the first of the week's concerts, which also features Brahms's Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 101. The performers include the mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger and the pianist Stephanie Brown. ♦ Feb. 9 at 7:30 and Feb. 10 at 4: The violinists Ani Kavafian and Carmit Zori and the violist Nokuthula Ngwenyama join the cellist Ronald Thomas for a program of Turina (the inevitable "Oración del Torero"), Mozart, and Beethoven (the "Harp" Quartet, Op. 74). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

BANG ON A CAN ALL-STARS
This perpetual new-music festival, begun in 1987 by an ambitious bunch of cooler-than-thou composers from Yale, has stayed fresh and vital by always welcoming ambassadors from the musical edge. In this concert, a new discovery from Burma, Kyaw Kyaw Naing, performs four of his recent works with the All-Stars on the *pat-waing* (a circle of twenty-one ornate Burmese tuned drums), and the jazz clarinettist Don Byron sits in for the New York première of his piece "Eugene 1," inspired by Ernie Kovacs kinescopes from the nineteen-fifties. Music by Tan Dun ("Concerto for Six") and a new work by Scott Johnson complete the program. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Feb. 9 at 8.)

MUSIC FROM JAPAN FESTIVAL
Feb. 9 at 8: New York's annual celebration of Japanese composers begins with a concert of music by Akira Nishimura, including "Pipa" (for three guitars) and the world première of "Avatars," an hour-long work played by the renowned pianist Aki Takahashi. ♦ Feb. 10 at 2: Ensemble Harena presents an afternoon of traditional and contemporary works in the style of *gagaku,* the ancient music of the Japanese court. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.)

MUSIC AT THE 92ND STREET Y
Feb. 9 at 8: The Tokyo String Quartet brings its cool and fastidious style to music by Brahms (the two rhapsodic string quintets, with the violist Phillip Ying) and to Fabio Vacchi's String Quartet No. 3, an American première. ♦ Feb. 12 at 8: A quirky program of music for expanded strings (including Enescu's Octet in C Major and Dvořák's Sextet in A Major), presented by the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.)

JOSHUA BELL
The violinist presents a program of Beethoven, Franck, Stravinsky (the "Divertimento"), Tchaikovsky, and Sarasate (the "Carmen Fantasy"), with the pianist Simon Mulligan. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Feb. 10 at 3.)

MUSIC BY AARON COPLAND
Two members of the Emerson String Quartet—Eugene Drucker and Lawrence Dutton—are among the guest artists joining in a tribute concert presented by the Harmonie Ensemble/New York, including such works as "Appalachian Spring" and a true rarity, "El Salón México" in a piano arrangement by Toscanini. (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. Feb. 10 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

MUSIC BEFORE 1800 SERIES: THE CLERK'S GROUP
The British vocal sextet, experts in the music of the Flemish Renaissance, performs music by Josquin Des Prez. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Feb. 10 at 4.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Music by Prokofiev—the crunchy harmonies and stinging lyricism of the Sonata for Two Violins, from 1932—provides a foil for two elegant works from Imperial Russia, Tchaikovsky's sumptuous "Souvenir de Florence" (for string sextet) and the melancholy Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor by his younger confidant Anton Arensky. The performers include the pianist Jonathan Biss, the violist Paul Neubauer, the cellist Alisa Weilerstein, and the violinists Cho-Liang Lin and (in her Society début) Kyoko Takezawa. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788. Feb. 10 at 5 and Feb. 12 at 7:30.)

CONTINUUM ENSEMBLE: MUSIC BY SOFIA GUBAIDULINA
Continuum presents a concert in tribute to the veteran Russian composer, including her "Chaconne" for piano and "Perception," a work for voices, strings, and electronic tape. (Miller Theatre, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Feb. 12 at 8.)

MUSIC BY LUKAS FOSS
Foss, America's most valued musical eclectic, has always remained true to himself by embracing the most current trends of his time. The Music from Copland House ensemble presents a cross-section of forty years' worth of Foss's music, including two classic works, "Time Cycle" and "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Feb. 12 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Feb. 6 at 7:30: By Thomas Mallon, from "Mrs. Paine's Garage," his account of the Kennedy assassination as seen through the eyes of Ruth Paine, a onetime friend of Lee Harvey and Marina Oswald. (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Feb. 6 at 8: By the novelist Pagan Kennedy, from her new work of nonfiction, "Black Livingston: A True Tale of African Adventure in the Nineteenth-Century Congo." (Rocky Sullivan's, 129 Lexington Ave., between 28th and 29th Sts. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Feb. 11 at 8: Tom Wolfe and Robert Stone pay tribute to the late novelist Ken Kesey with readings from his works on the fortieth anniversary of the publication of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.)

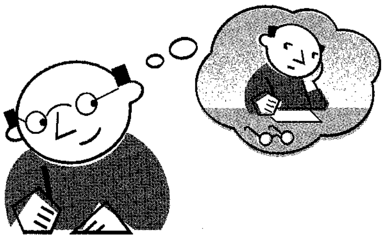
TALKS
Feb. 7 at 6: The constitutional-law scholar and Stanford Law School professor Lawrence Lessig discusses the future of copyright law. (Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, 55 Fifth Ave., at 12th St. For more information, call 790-0292.) ♦ Feb. 7 at 6: Brenda Berkman, a New York City firefighter who led the legal fight in the mid-seventies which resulted in the hiring of the first women firefighters, talks about women in the N.Y.F.D. (Esther Raushenbush Library, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville. For more information, call 914-395-2411.)

STEPHEN SAVAGE

BOOK CURRENTS

I, Me, Mine

With the recent publication of yet another autobiography by a notorious thirtysomething author, the literary form that James Merrill called the "me-moir" has officially become the me-me-memoir. These days, the self-reflection industry is booming, so much so that a new crop of meta-memoirs has begun to appear in stores. **ENOUGH ABOUT YOU: ADVENTURES IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY** (Simon & Schuster), by the novelist and essayist David Shields, is based on two puckish tenets: "What I ultimately believe in is talking about everything until you're blue in the face" and "If I'm not writing it down, experience doesn't really register." Shields's apologia for the genre is also a work of literary criticism, and, as he relates anecdotes about his stammer and embarrassing moments at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, he considers the role of personal experience in books like Renata Adler's "Speedboat" and George W. S. Trow's "Within the Context of No Context." And Daniel Harris's **A MEMOIR OF NO ONE IN PARTICULAR** (Basic) takes the genre even further, as the author applies the skills he learned in grad school to his daily existence by reading his own garbage as "text."



Given the self-indulgent tendencies of postmodern autobiography, it is bracing to read about a life of actual historical interest. In **SOME MEMORIES OF A LONG LIFE, 1854-1911** (Modern Library), Malvina Shanklin Harlan recounts her experiences as the wife of the first Justice John Marshall Harlan. An account of her "Belated Bridal Tour" sits alongside recollections of the Presidential campaign of 1876, her husband's appointment to the Supreme Court, and the social whirl of Washington, D.C., where Malvina finds herself gaping at Charlotte Astor's diamonds and singing hymns at the Hayes White House.

—Dana Goodyear

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MOVIES OPENING

BIG FAT LIAR
A Hollywood producer (Paul Giamatti) steals an essay written by a junior-high student (Frankie Muniz) and turns it into a hit film, in a comedy directed by Shawn Levy. Opening Feb. 8.

COLLATERAL DAMAGE
After his wife and child die in a terrorist attack, a firefighter (Arnold Schwarzenegger) takes matters into his own hands. Directed by Andrew Davis ("The Fugitive"). Opening Feb. 8.

ROLLERBALL
John McTiernan's remake of the 1975 film about the corrupt and deadly sport of rollerball. With Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, LL Cool J, and Chris Klein. Opening Feb. 8.

SCOTLAND, PA
A comic adaptation of "Macbeth," set in a sleepy Pennsylvania town in the nineteen-seventies. With Maura Tierney, James LeGros, Andy Dick, and Timothy (Speed) Levitch. Opening Feb. 8.

FILM NOTES

AMÉLIE
A waifish Parisienne discovers her mission in life: to bring unexpected happiness to others, and so to herself. Such is the story of Amélie (Audrey Tautou), and the simplicity of it appears to have touched a universal nerve. Tautou is clearly a find, although one wonders what Mathieu Kassovitz, who plays the object of her affection, made of his role; it was Kassovitz who, in 1995, yanked French cinema up to date with his baring of ethnic hostilities in "La Haine." The Paris of this movie lies at the other extreme, although what nags at you most is not the neighborly charm but the itchy, unsettled manner of the director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet. How far should we trust a plea for benevolence when it feels like a box of tricks? In French.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/01.) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Paris, and 34th Street Theatre.)

A BEAUTIFUL MIND
If you think the title stinks, try the movie. Russell Crowe plays John Nash, a real-life mathematician whose most radical work was produced in his early twenties and who shared the 1994 Nobel Prize for Economics at the age of sixty-six. In between lay years of darkness, during which Nash was assailed by paranoid schizophrenia. When it comes to the delicate matter of his delusions, this earnest movie, written by Akiva Goldsman and directed by Ron Howard, pulls a flagrant scam: whole characters and episodes are presented as urgently authentic, only to be revealed as figments of a cracked imagination. Crowe pulls out the stops, but he looks too bullish and controlled for such a pitiable victim. The movie grinds on forever until it bumps into redemption; the best reason to stay with it is Jennifer Connelly, who smolders and suffers to perfection as Nash's weary wife. Math skills not required.—*A.L.* (1/7/02) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

Opening Feb. 8, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Chris Klein, and LL Cool J in "Rollerball."

BLACK HAWK DOWN
This account of the ill-fated 1993 Special Forces action in Mogadishu, Somalia, which resulted in the death of eighteen Americans, is exceptionally violent but also truthful to the pain and disorder of battle. It's very clearly directed by Ridley Scott, who allows you to see where the different groups of men are fighting in relation to one another. The movie suggests that despite the casualties the battle was not a total failure but rather a demonstration of strength—the men were killed, in part, because they stayed in the danger zone to rescue survivors from the two helicopters that were shot down. With Sam Shepard, Tom Sizemore, and Josh Hartnett, all submerging themselves in the business at hand. Ken Nolan, adapting Mark Bowden's book, achieves the right tone of matter-of-factness, resolution, and defiance.—*David Denby* (12/24 & 31/01) (Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BROTHERHOOD OF THE WOLF
A genre-busting treat—part costume drama, part martial-arts horror film—concerning a ferocious, man-eating beast that roams the mountains of eighteenth-century France. The film, directed energetically by Christophe Gans, gets the jolts started with the gruesome death of a peasant girl, which is imaginatively taken from the opening scene of "Jaws." Gans casts his film with gorgeous performers (Samuel Le Bihan as the naturalist sent to investigate, Monica Bellucci as a mysterious courtesan), and his eye-candy sets and thoroughly fruity ideas pack the film with enough outré juxtapositions to make Baz Luhrmann blush. In French.—*Bruce Diones* (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

DAY FOR NIGHT
François Truffaut made this 1973 tribute to the conventional movies that had once given him pleasure, and apparently still did. He himself plays a director who is shooting an American-financed film called "Meet Pamela," with Jean-Pierre Léaud, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Jacqueline Bisset, and Valentina Cortese. "Day for Night," unfortunately ordinary in its approach to character, is very childlike—filled with a deeply innocent love of the magic of moviemaking. There's not much to it, though it's graceful. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (Florence Gould Hall; Feb. 12.)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Film Forum.)

GOSFORD PARK
This Agatha Christie-style houseparty murder mystery, set in 1932, plants itself deep into social reality and achieves the kind of candor about class and sex that Christie would never have been capable of. The idea came from Bob Balaban and Robert Altman; the brilliant screenplay was written by Julian Fellowes. Altman directs an enormous cast with lightness and speed and a masterly ability to pull the many little pieces of intrigue together into a coherent whole. Casually, the movie chronicles the end of the rigid British class system and the liberation of the working class through popular entertainment. The once-in-a-lifetime cast includes Michael Gambon, Kristin Scott Thomas, Maggie Smith, Jeremy Northam, and Charles Dance as the swells, and Helen Mirren, Eileen Atkins, Alan Bates, Clive Owen, and Emily Watson as the servants. Bob Balaban plays a Hollywood producer of Charlie Chan mysteries, and Ryan Phillippe is his valet, a cherub-faced erotic toy that anyone can play with.—*D.D.* (1/14/02) (Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

I AM SAM
An awkwardly sincere attempt to come to terms with an impossible subject. Sam (Sean Penn), a retarded Santa Monica man, has a brilliant daughter (Dakota Fanning) who reaches the age of seven and begins to surpass him; now the authorities want to separate them. Penn, openmouthed, starting and stammering, plunges deep into Sam's confusions and his innate good-heartedness. The trouble is,

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Penn doesn't know when to stop: he repeats every poetic movement or despairing emotion again and again. The writer-director Jessie Nelson suffers from a similar surfeit of goodness. In portraying the entire way of life of Sam and his "challenged" friends, she overtaxes the audience's kindest impulses. Michelle Pfeiffer shows up as Sam's high-strung lawyer—a beautiful striver, brilliant and accomplished, but an unhappy wreck. Pfeiffer is so likable in the role that she almost saves the movie. Almost.—*D.D.* (1/28/02) (Cinema 3rd Avenue, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

IN THE BEDROOM

In Camden, Maine, a twenty-one-year-old college student, Frank (Nick Stahl), is having a headlong summer affair with a local woman, Natalie (Marisa Tomei). Natalie is separated from her husband (William Mapother), the loutish scion of a prominent local family. When the husband kills his rival, Frank's hypercivilized parents (Tom Wilkinson and Sissy Spacek) begin to consider vengeance as a way of saving themselves from destroying each other. This Sophoclean tale, fleshed out from an elliptical short story by Andre Dubus, draws its strength from minute observation of settings and moods, and from a gradual tightening of the winch. Much of it is very quiet (the first-time director, Todd Field, is an actor and a photographer), but when it explodes, the violence actually means something.—*D.D.* (11/26/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea West, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 34th Street Theatre.)

LANTANA

The metaphorical title refers to a plant bearing exotic flowers (and hidden thorns beneath). The movie, directed by Ray Lawrence, concerns four sets of married couples whose lives are in various states of disarray and a missing person's investigation that will connect them all. Anthony LaPaglia is especially memorable as the guilt-ridden chief detective, but all the veteran actors (including Geoffrey Rush and Barbara Hershey) have engaging roles. There's an Altman-like brio to the ensemble cast which keeps the movie spinning intriguingly to its conclusion.—*B.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Quad Cinema, and Union Square.)

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

It takes about forty-five minutes for the movie to emerge from Sir Ian McKellen's beard (he plays the garrulous wizard Gandalf), but once it does, this enormous hunk of quasi-medieval myth, based on the work of J. R. R. Tolkien, is consistently beautiful and exciting. The New Zealander director Peter Jackson, who wrote the screenplay with Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, works with enough dramatic tension and pictorial grandeur to sustain us through long periods of complicated exposition and heavy bouts of swordplay. Elijah Wood, of the troubled blue eyes, plays the hobbit Frodo. He is accompanied in this quest by Gandalf, two noble human warriors (Viggo Mortensen and Sean Bean), an intemperate, black-bearded dwarf (John Rhys-Davies), and various scampering halflings. The New Zealand landscapes—jagged mountains, thickety glens, limitless plains—add to the aura of enchantment.—*D.D.* (12/24 & 31/01) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 2, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

MONSTER'S BALL

Marc Forster's movie delivers an unworkable paradox: the characters are inarticulate, damaged people who have led heedless and tragic lives—portrayed with bitter realism—and yet the plotting is sheer Hollywood in its schemes and coincidences. Billy Bob Thornton is the Georgia corrections officer who conducts the execution of the husband (Sean "Puffy" Combs) of a local waitress (Halle Berry) and then falls in love with the widow. The slow, reticent dramaturgy has its moments of authenticity, especially in the balanced interracial romance: Thornton is quiet and affecting and Berry acts up a storm.—*D.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ORANGE COUNTY

Mike White and Jake Kasdan, two of the talents who gave us the achingly nerdy television series "Freaks & Geeks," churn out a power-pop teen comedy for MTV Productions. The movie is loaded with cameos, the best of which is Lily Tomlin as a memory-impaired guidance counselor. When one of her lapses prevents the affable senior-class president (Colin Hanks) from gaining acceptance to Stanford, he decides to argue his case in person, enlisting the help of his crunchy girlfriend (Schuyler Fisk) and his sweaty armpit of a brother (Jack Black). Black, a volcanic pudgeball, spends most of his screen time snapping wisecracks in his tighty whities; needless to say, he's the funniest thing on display. In the movie's mellower moments, it slips in some clever jokes about the writing life and more than a few homoerotic asides. Kasdan and White are clearly having a lot of fun imagining Orange County as a land of the hopelessly vapid: who wouldn't want to attend a high school where the teacher says "Juliet?" and the students respond: "Claire Danes."—*Michael Agger* (First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS

After the brilliance of "Rushmore," his levelheaded look at the gifts of a misfit, where could Wes Anderson go next? In the event, he has broadened his scope to take in an entire family of misfits: the Tenenbaums, residing in their colorful town house like kooky modern leftovers from the age of Edith Wharton—an age of innocence indeed, despite the ill will that gusts around. The parents (Gene Hackman and Anjelica Huston) raised three overachieving children (Ben Stiller, Luke Wilson, and Gwyneth Paltrow) and then separated. We are here for the aftermath: the daughter's fading marriage to a bearded melancholic (Bill Murray), and other sunderings and patchings-up. The movie is packed tight with strong, if baffled, feelings, and yet we could be watching it through glass; Anderson specializes in the cool, astringent gaze, and for anyone sick of Hollywood heart-melters this could be the antidote.—*A.L.* (12/17/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE SHIPPING NEWS

As Quoyle, a man who feels he's been drowning his entire life, Kevin Spacey speaks in a disembodied voice just above a whisper, and he's so tearful and cringing that he seems to have stepped out of the pages of an early Dickens novel. This flamboyantly masochistic display of humility nearly destroys any pleasure to be found in Lasse Hallström's fluent adaptation of E. Annie Proulx's novel. Most of the picture takes place in a Newfoundland fishing village, where the chilled inhabitants make a sweet little community. Their misery has a comic lilt to it: life is so harsh that there's nothing to do but tell wild tales and make jokes in the gray light. The cast includes Pete Postlethwaite, Scott Glenn, Cate Blanchett as a floozy, Judi Dench as Spacey's tough-minded aunt, and Julianne Moore as his new friend. Everyone has a secret.—*D.D.* (1/28/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SON'S ROOM

The Italian director Nanni Moretti has delved into his darkest material to date and come up with his best film; even here, amazing to report, his customary lightness of touch has not deserted him. Moretti himself stars as a psychiatrist, Giovanni, who is married to the calm and adoring Paola (Laura Morante). They have two children, (Jasmine Trinca and Giuseppe Sanfelice), one of whom dies, taking with him the dream of a happy family. Moretti's pacing is hard to fault, as he follows the hairline cracks that widen into gulfs and leave the household looking isolated and loveless. As a case study, the movie adds little to the archives of grief, and rightly so; Moretti is simply drawing up his own distinctively colored map of familiar terrain. In its sharp-etched way, this is no less comic than Moretti's other work, and, for all its sophistication, the comedy is of the primitive kind—that of continuing to live (to jog, to cook, to go to school) when the reason to live has fallen from your hands. In Italian.—*A.L.* (2/4/02) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

STORYTELLING

Another disturbance of the peace from the writer-director Todd Solondz, who made "Welcome to the Dollhouse" and "Happiness." This time, we get a movie split in half, the first part of which concerns a creative-writing student (Selma Blair), thin and white, who dumps her disabled boyfriend and, for good measure, sleeps with her black professor. In the second half, we trace the exploits of a documentary filmmaker (Paul Giamatti) who wants to unearth what the youth of today are doing with themselves in high school. The answer is, more or less, nothing, although we do come across one slacker who would like to be on TV. In short, Solondz presents two tales meant to winkle out the cultural encounters that embarrass us the most, and then twists the knife and leaves us squirming harder than before. It's clever enough, and you could gash yourself on some of the lines, but, when a director is as resolutely ungenerous as Solondz, the end can only come as a relief.—*A.L.* (2/4/02) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

WHAT TIME IS IT THERE?

A young Taipei watch vender reluctantly sells a pretty Paris-bound girl his own watch, then finds himself longing for her, so much so that he begins setting the clocks all over the city to Paris time. Meanwhile, his recently widowed mother is looking for signs that her dead husband has returned to her. The director Tsai Ming-liang's haunting meditation on loneliness and time is a lovely, mordant piece of moviemaking. His immobile camera compositions and bare-bones use of dialogue allow the performers to play out their complicated emotional lives with a dramatic stillness and a dotty humor that is, at times, breathtaking. In Mandarin, Taiwanese, and French.—*B.D.* (Cinema Village.)

ALSO PLAYING

BIRTHDAY GIRL

East 86th Street Cinemas, Cinema 2, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

ITALIAN FOR BEGINNERS

Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and New York Twin.

KANDAHAR (12/10/01)

State and Sunshine Cinema.

THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES

East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

MULHOLLAND DRIVE (10/15/01)

Cinema Village, Empire 25, and 59th Street East Cinema.

PIÑERO

Lincoln Square and Sunshine Cinema.

SLACKERS

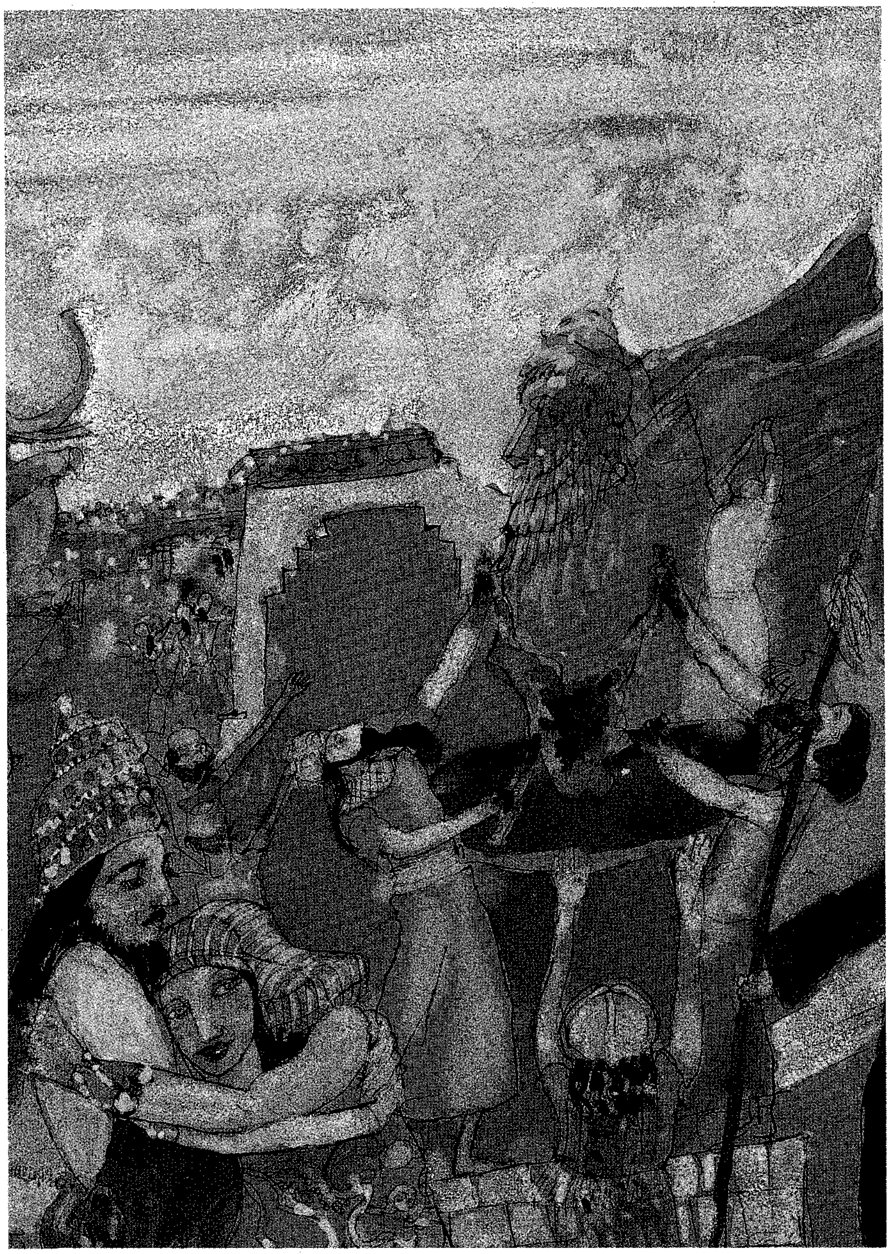
Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.

Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



KISS KISS BANG BANG *In memory of the film critic Pauline Kael, BAM will screen ten of her favorite movies (including "Melvin & Howard" and "Pennies from Heaven"), introduced by critics and directors who knew her and loved her writing. The tribute begins February 11 with D. W. Griffith's 1916 epic, "Intolerance," which Kael called "perhaps the greatest movie ever made and the greatest folly in movie history."*

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REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Feb. 17: "Across 110th Street: Images of Harlem on Film." Feb. 9 at 2: "The Cool World" (1963, Shirley Clarke). ♦ Feb. 9 at 4:30: "Paradise in Harlem" (1939, Joseph Seiden). ♦ Feb. 10 at 2: "The Brother from Another Planet" (1984, John Sayles). ♦ Feb. 10 at 4: "The Cotton Club" (1984, Francis Ford Coppola). ♦ Repertory night. Feb. 9-10 at 6:30: "Bob Le Flambeur" (1955, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Through Feb. 12: "Larry Fessenden's Trilogy of Terror." Feb. 6, Feb. 9, and Feb. 11 at 7; Feb. 7 at 9:30; Feb. 10 at 4:30 and 9; and Feb. 12 at 9:30: "No Telling" (1991). ♦ Feb. 6 and Feb. 11 at 9, Feb. 7-8 and Feb. 12 at 7, Feb. 9 at 4:30 and 9, and Feb. 10 at 6:30: "Habit" (1997). ♦ Feb. 8 at 9:30: "Wendigo" (2001).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Feb. 6-7 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Loners" (2000, David Ondricek; in Czech). ♦ Feb. 8-10 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Life and Debt" (2001, Stephanie Black). ♦ A tribute to Pauline Kael. Feb. 11 at 7:30: "Intolerance" (1916, D. W. Griffith), introduced by the critic David Edelstein. ♦ Feb. 12 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French). The 6:50 screening will be introduced by the director Michael Almereyda.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Feb. 7: "Greatest Hits." Feb. 6-7 at 1, 4:50, and 8:40: "L'Atalante" (1934, Jean Vigo; in French). ♦ Feb. 6-7 at 2:40, 6:30, and 10:20: "Grand Illusion" (1937, Jean Renoir; in French). ♦ Starting Feb. 8 at 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, and 10: A new print of Mira Nair's "Salaam Bombay!" (1988; in English and Hindi).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Films that portray *la vie d'artiste*. Feb. 12 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Day for Night" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Feb. 21: "Alexander Sokurov: A Retrospective." All films are in Russian. Feb. 7 at 2:30: "Moscow Elegy" (1986-87) and "Hubert Robert, a Fortunate Life" (1996). ♦ Feb. 7 at 6: "Simple Elegy" (1990) and "An Elegy from Russia" (1993). ♦ Feb. 8 at 2:30: "The Lonely Voice of Man" (1978-87). ♦ Feb. 8 at 6: "Mother and Son" (1997). ♦ Feb. 9 at 2: "Mournful Indifference" (1983-87). ♦ Feb. 9 at 5 and Feb. 12 at 2:30: "Elegy of a Voyage" (2001) and "A Humble Life" (1997). ♦ Feb. 10 at 1: "Save and Protect" (1989). ♦ Feb. 10 at 5: "Stone" (1992). ♦ Feb. 11 at 2:30: "A Soldier's Dream" (1995) and "Maria" (1978-88). ♦ Feb. 11 at 6: "Elegy" (1985-86) and "Dmitri Shostakovich: Sonata for Viola" (1981-86). ♦ Feb. 12 at 6: "Oriental Elegy" (1996) and "Dolce" (1999).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Feb. 7: "Wry Smiles, Suspicious Glances: The Films of Andrzej Munk." All films are in Polish. Feb. 6 at 1 and Feb. 7 at 7:15: "Bad Luck" (1960). ♦ Feb. 6 at 3:15 and Feb. 7 at 9:30: "Passenger" (1961-63). ♦ Feb. 6 at 8 and Feb. 7 at 5: "Eroica" (1958). ♦ Feb. 7 at 1: "The Men of the Blue Cross" (1955). ♦ Feb. 7 at 2:45: "Man on the Tracks" (1956). ♦ Starting Feb. 8: "Afghanistan Then and Now." Feb. 8 at 1 and 6:15, Feb. 9 at 8:45, Feb. 11 at 4:45, and Feb. 12 at 1 and 6:15: "Dust of War" (1990, Christophe de Ponfilly). ♦ Feb. 8 at 3:15 and 8:30, Feb. 9 at 6, Feb. 11 at 2, and Feb. 12 at 3:15 and 8:30: "Massoud l'Afghan" (1998, de Ponfilly) and "Kabul at the End of the World" (1993, de Ponfilly). ♦ Feb. 10 at 4:30: "Jung (War): In the Land of the Mujaheddin" (2000, Fabrizio Lazzaretti and Alberto Vendemmiati).

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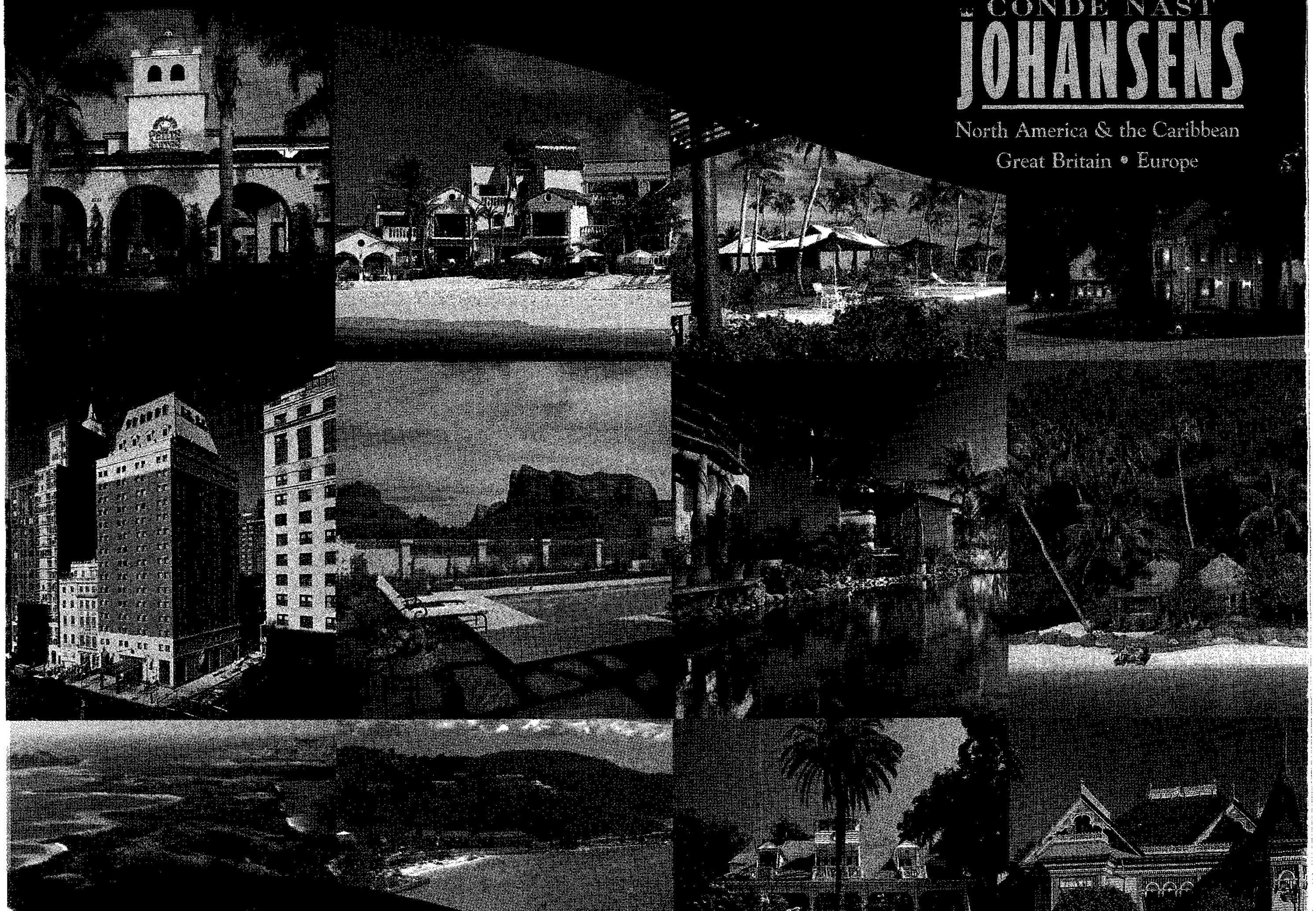

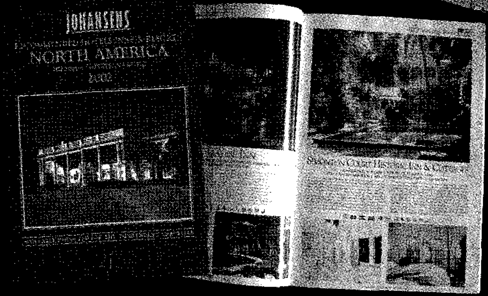

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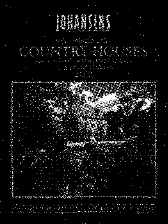

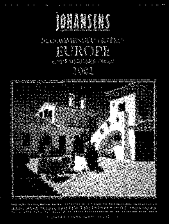

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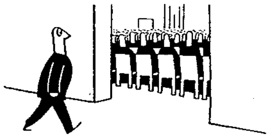
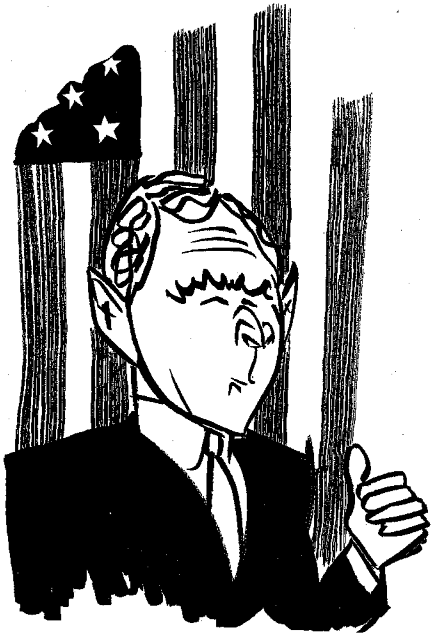


A political by-product of the modern cult of personal authenticity is a tendency to treat a President's off-the-cuff remarks as more revelatory than the prepared kind. And so they can be. But the prepared kind are a better guide to policy, especially when an Administration is as disciplined as Bush II. No Presidential speech is worked over more obsessively than the annual message on the State of the Union, which every Administration treats as the year's most important guide to policy. And in George W. Bush's first State of the Union address, delivered last Tuesday evening, the most carefully worked-over line was probably this one, which followed hard upon a condemnation of North Korea, Iran, and Iraq: "States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world."

"Axis of evil" is a phrase worth lingering on. By combining allusions to the two great global struggles of living memory, it raises—rhetorically, at least—the stakes of the campaign against terrorism. But Bush's evil axis, unlike the Axis powers of the Second World War (the coinage was Mussolini's), is not an alliance. Apart from being three in number and nasty in disposition, North Korea, Iran, and Iraq have little in common with the Germany, Italy, and Japan of 1940; and, apart from an appetite for weapons of mass destruction and a history of dabbling in terrorism, they have little in common with each other. Indeed, the biggest war either Iran or Iraq has ever fought was fought between them.

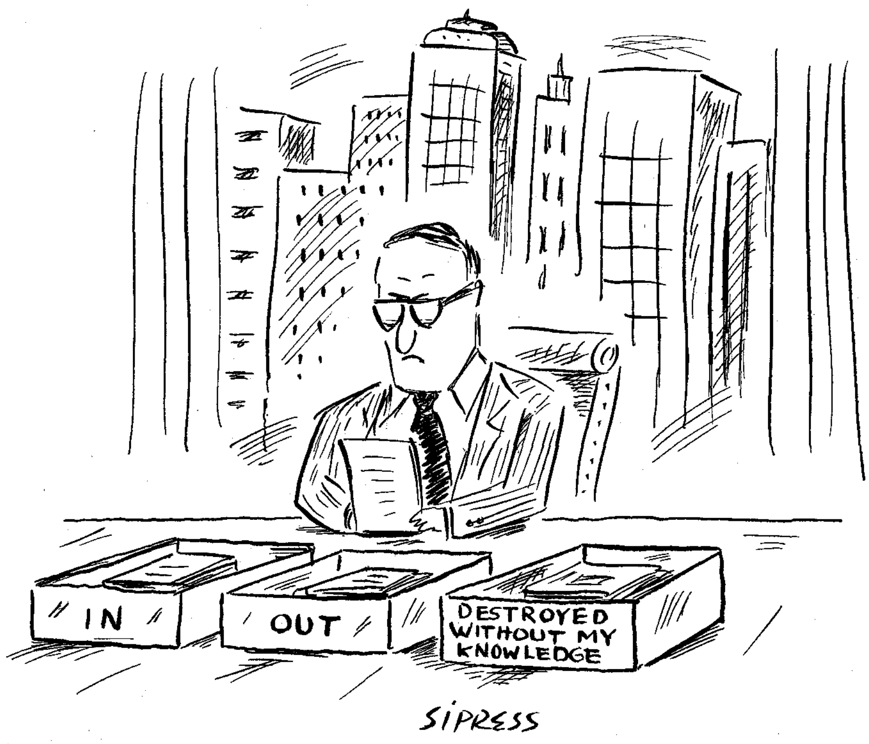
North Korea is a hermit kingdom ruled by a hereditary Communist monarch. It has no powerful friends and partakes of no worldwide movement. The threat that it presents is almost certainly manageable via a combination of diplomacy and economic inducements, a path that South Korea seems determined to pursue, despite discouragement from Washington. Until now, the Administration has viewed North Korea more as a trope than as a country, seeing it chiefly as an argument for missile defense. Its inclusion in Bush's list seems designed both to buttress that argument, which has little to do with the events of September 11th, and to keep the list from consisting entirely of Islamic countries.



Iran is a special case. It has feisty internal politics and, nominally, an elected government, but the real power lies with a shadowy council of mullahs. (Bush was referring to them when he noted that "an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom.") Iran's support for terrorism begins with Hezbollah but does not end there. And yet, for any number of reasons, there is essentially no possibility that the United States would choose to go to war against Iran.

That leaves Iraq, the most hostile and dangerous of the three. The Bush speech, on its face, appeared to be laying the groundwork for a war aimed at toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein and thereby completing a job that the President's father had left unfinished. It is not at all clear, however, how the Administration intends to proceed. A war, unless it were to be concluded as briskly as was the much easier task of subduing Afghanistan, would carry the risk of alienating Europe and Russia, rattling the tacit global consensus behind the anti-terrorist fight, and provoking an attack on Israel. Other options—such as offering supplies and training to insurgents inside Iraq—are evidently under consideration. By rhetorically combin-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



ing Iraq with Iran and North Korea under the rubric of an axis, Bush evoked the memory, and raised the spectre, of war on a terrifying scale. But by the same token he left himself the option of dealing with all three in a consistent and necessarily less bellicose manner.

The other half of Bush's formula recalled, no doubt intentionally, Ronald Reagan's most famous phrase. "Evil Empire" is now chiselled on history's wall next to "Iron Curtain" as an example of prescient moral clarity. But it is worth recalling that in 1983, when President Reagan pinned that tail on the Soviet donkey, he touched off a good deal of justifiable anxiety. It was easy to infer that he was ruling out the possibility of a peaceful future: one does not compromise with evil. At the time, though, the Soviet Union's days of evil were mostly behind it. As Reagan understood, the Soviet Union was a ramshackle, dysfunctional mess whose inheritors were flailing about for ways to fix it. War, it turned out, was the last thing on Reagan's mind; his eagerness to compromise alarmed many of his admirers, some of whom now serve the present Administration. But the phrase touched off a kind of rhetorical inflation, and Bush now freely spends the currency that Reagan printed.

In other words, "evil" doesn't have the buying power it once did. At the same time, it applies far more aptly to the terrorists of Al Qaeda and their ilk than it did to the Soviet Union in its dotage. The latter was an unhappy assemblage of three hundred million, most of whom yearned for peace with the United States; the former consists, as Bush accurately put it, of "thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes." Bush was right to stress that the struggle against them does not end in Afghanistan, and that it will be long and difficult. But there is danger in the conflation of terrorists and states. A government, even one as tyrannical and aggressive as Iraq's, always has something to lose and something to gain. Saddam Hussein is a murderer, but there is no evidence that he is a suicide, or that he is incapable of rational calculation. The war against terrorism was and is unsought, unavoidable, and existential. It is a war of necessity. That, in the end, is why it commands the public's nearly unanimous support. Certainly, the fall of Saddam Hussein is devoutly to be wished for. But an American war aimed at achieving that goal—a war of choice, a war that, in all likelihood, would be long, bloody, and fraught with unanticipated and unpleasant consequences—is not.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

ONE WORLD DEPT.
DREAMS OF DAVOS

Last Wednesday evening, the night before the World Economic Forum's annual meeting got under way, Klaus Schwab, the forum's founder, and George Soros, the financier, held a party at the headquarters of the Open Society Institute, on West Fifty-ninth Street. The party was to honor forty "social entrepreneurs," individuals who have chosen to apply themselves not to increasing their personal wealth but to alleviating social problems—AIDS in Africa, orphans in India—that have traditionally been left to woollier, not-for-profit types. Social entrepreneurialism is in vogue right now: if you are in business school, this is what you want to do, just as three years ago you wanted to start a dot-com. The forum had been moved to New York this year from its usual location, in Davos, Switzerland, and it was the first time that such a group had been invited to join the capitalist potentates who are the forum's more typical participants. The entrepreneurs seemed rather like a bunch of cool new kids who'd been bused into a suburban high school and were exotically subverting the social hierarchy.

"This is the first time we can remember going to a cocktail party in New York and not knowing anyone," said Cynthia Brill, who was with her husband, the publisher Steve Brill. "We were just saying that this is such a phenomenal city that it can simply swallow Davos."

Steve Brill was smiling approachably at passersby. "Who are all these people?" he said. "I don't know anyone here except George. I'm sure that if I knew who all these people were I'd be impressed. That tall guy over there is probably the Alan Greenspan of Finland. The Steve Brill of Monrovia could be here, and I wouldn't know it. I'd be too shy to ask."

As it turned out, the social entrepreneurs had ideas even more out of the box than starting courtroom-based cable-TV channels or media-business magazines. There was James Price Chuck, a young economist from Chicago, whose organization, Knitting Together Nations, markets knitwear produced by Bosnian women to designers such as Agnès B. and Edina Ronay. "You take Old World skills and New World design, and you have got the best product on the block," Chuck said, his salesmanship Seventh Avenue-perfect. Takao Furuno, a farmer from Japan, whose forum badge read "Duck Power," and whose business card included the slogan "The World where one duck creates boundless treasures," explained how he had discovered that by introducing ducks into organic-rice paddies he could eliminate insects and weeds while also producing a second food product, duck meat. He hoped to spread this innovation across Asia. "This is a new way of looking at ducks," he said.

In addition to saving the world, the topics of conversation on Wednesday evening included the hospitality provided thus far by New York City and the Waldorf-Astoria, which was hosting the conference. Orville Schell, the dean of the journalism school at Berkeley, said that he was staying at the Harvard Club. "At the Waldorf, it's like the Brandenburg Gate—they look under your hood, in your trunk," he said. Schell's day had already been disrupted, by a shoe-bomb scare at the San Francisco airport. "We had to land in Chicago, where we were greeted by some very charming canines and had to take off our shoes," he said. Schell and his fellow conference veteran Aryeh Neier, the president of the Open Society Institute, seemed nostalgic for the mountainside Davos of old.

"I'd have felt safer there than here," Schell said.

"There, there's just the one street, and they can shut it off," Neier agreed.

"There are not too many skiing Arabs, so it would have been easy," Schell added. "But I suppose in their worst fantasies the organizers imagined terrorists rolling a primitive nuclear device down the hill."

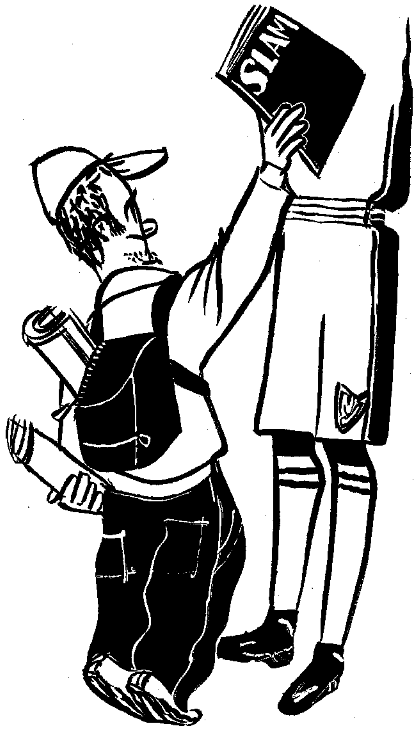
Schell was, at least, primed for an intense four-day exposure to power and influence, having spent the previous afternoon at an event with Bill Clinton in California. ("The difference between hearing Bill Clinton speak and listening to our President's State of the Union address was the difference between hearing Shakespeare and the New York phone book read aloud," he said.) Still, Davos in New York was a daunting endeavor. "I have this very relieved sense that I am not in charge," Schell said.

—*Rebecca Mead*

THE HARDWOOD
THE SLAM TEAM

The magazine *Slam*, which has been around since 1994 and has a circulation of nearly a quarter of a million and an editorial staff of five, is all about basketball. It is aimed at young, obsessive fans and is full of hip-hop idiom (sample headline: "HE READY"; sample text: "Holla at a player, yo"). There are admiring profiles, pullout posters, a sneaker-fashion page, and features on such obscurist's passions as the six players in National Basketball Association history whose careers lasted only one minute of game time.

Slam's reporters are easy to spot in the press rows at Knicks and Nets games. Russ Bengtson, who, besides producing a good deal of copy, serves as the editor-in-chief, is thirty years old and has red hair in a crewcut with flared sideburns, and usually wears skull-shaped earrings, baggy jeans, high-tops, and some kind of sports jersey. A favorite is one with the name "Satan" on the back—for Miroslav Satan, a Slovakian hockey player. "It's pronounced 'Shuh-*tan*,' " he said. "Other than that, I have no interest in hockey." Lang Whitaker, another *Slam* writer-editor, looks a little like Russ—grown-out crewcut, growing-in goatee, baseball jersey, baggy jeans, Air Jordan Retros.



Lang Whitaker

The other night, Russ and Lang took a Town Car to the Meadowlands, where the Los Angeles Clippers were visiting the New Jersey Nets. "The Nets are a lot more fun to cover than the Knicks, and it's not just because they're finally winning and the Knicks are finally losing," Russ said. (Notwithstanding a recent surge, the Knicks last month had an eight-game losing streak, including their most lopsided home defeat ever, while the Nets, awful for so many years, have the best record in the Eastern Conference.) "It's true," Russ went on. "The Garden is old and historic and the Meadowlands is generic, like the inside of a refrigerator. But, once a game starts, that all goes away. The Knicks and that boring, defense-first basketball—they never did much on a nightly basis to make me want to put them in the magazine."

"Obviously, the Nets are more of a *Slam* team," Lang said. "They're up-tempo. The Knicks shouldn't be on TV so much." Lang, who grew up in suburban Atlanta, volunteered that he had played high-school ball against Shandon Anderson, who is now on the Knicks: "He blocked one of my shots up into the stands."

"We did a Nets cover in '98 that said, 'Nets: Champs by 2001,' " Russ said. "We might be off by only a year."

An hour and a half before tipoff, while the Clippers took shooting practice, Lang stood on the sideline and pulled copies of the new issue from his backpack. A couple of players loped over. High fives were exchanged. The Clippers, towering above him, reached down for their copies. "The cover's hot," Darius Miles, a Clippers forward, said. "*Slam*, they show everybody a lot of love."

"Check out the letters to the editor," Lang said. Three members of the Clippers had appeared on the cover of the previous issue—wearing each other's jerseys, backward, to demonstrate unity—and this month readers had written in to ask why two other teammates, Quentin Richardson and Corey Maggette, hadn't been in the photograph.

Richardson sat down on the bench to read the letters page, oblivious of an assistant coach who was calling him onto the court to resume shootaround. "It's an epic, Q.," Lang said to him. "But they misspelled your name."

As Richardson read, Darius Miles ambled back onto the floor and started hitting three-pointers from the corner. "Look at how big Darius's feet are," Lang said. "He's a size 18. Shaquille O'Neal wears a 22."

Alvin Gentry, the Clippers' head coach, walked over. "*Slam* is word," he said. "Everybody on my team reads it. I feel too old for all that language, but these kids here can translate for me." He gestured at his players.

Eventually, Russ and Lang took their seats along the sideline for the start of the game. Lang pointed to Kenyon Martin, a Nets forward, and asked, "Hey, why's he doing that to his socks?" Martin's socks were pulled up to his knees. "He's never done that." In his notebook he wrote, "Kenyon's socks."

For a while, the game was close, but New Jersey pulled away in the second half and won, 108–89, on an evening full of alley-oops and no-look passes. When it was over, Lang headed to the Nets' locker room. He went up to the team's center, Todd MacCulloch, who began lobbying him for April's "Slamadamonth" honor, a regular two-page spread depicting a player throwing down a huge slam dunk that—and this is the important part—humiliates the player who is guarding him. MacCulloch had executed a perfect two-hander on Miami's Alonzo Mourning a couple of nights before.

"I hope nobody else has a good dunk all month long," MacCulloch said. "I really want Slamadamonth."

—*Eric Konigsberg*

ROB THE RICH DEPT.
THE KING OF CABARET

A few weeks ago, John Loan, a forty-five-year-old events planner, was arrested in Manhattan and charged with embezzling more than three million dollars from the firm he worked for, Alliance Capital Management. This was no ordinary swindle. Loan reportedly used the money—which prosecutors say he stole by writing checks to a company he'd created, called Beautiful Parties—to perform good deeds: to pay the medical expenses of an AIDS-stricken lover, start a foundation for victims of Down's syndrome, and give friends and acquaintances the funds to cover everything from back rent and college tuition to a quadruple-bypass operation and a trip to Lourdes. He also became, under the pseudonym John Jerome, a self-styled impresario of cabaret, a patron of uncommon largesse whose arrest has deprived the straitened world of torch singers and supper clubs of its latest great hope.

In the fall of 1999, Loan—who had been advertising his services as a private acting coach—started turning up, dressed in leather pants and a mesh T-shirt, at Arci's Place, Triad, and other cabaret clubs around town. He introduced himself to everyone as John Jerome, and asked performers why they didn't have CDs coming out. He was starting a record label, Jerome Records. Its logo was a blue butterfly, and its slogan was "You're Going to Be Surprised."

Over the next year, Loan hired a public-relations firm, placed ads in trade publications, and commissioned Al Hirschfeld to draw a caricature of him. He issued seven CDs (among them the début recording of Kristopher McDowell, his former boyfriend) and made lucrative deals for more than a dozen others, with a roster of artists comprising relative unknowns (Laurie Krauz, Jessica Molaskey, Anna Bergman), cabaret regulars (Heather Mac Rae, Jeff Harnar, Phillip Officer), and Broadway veterans (Karen Mason, Christine Andreas, Mary Testa), along with the seventy-seven-year-old singer Julie Wilson and a Barbra Streisand impersonator named Steven Brinberg. Loan rarely haggled, either over contracts (his entertainment lawyer also represented many of the singers who recorded for him) or over creative decisions (Heather Mac Rae says that he told her, "Do whatever you want—I have no artistic control"). When Mac Rae—who is the daughter of the late actors Gordon and Sheila Mac Rae—couldn't afford to promote a CD she had recorded for another label, Loan bankrolled an engagement for her at the Firebird night club.

"He obviously wanted to be liked and accepted," Jamie deRoy, a singer who was on the verge of signing a three-record deal with Loan, said the other day. "The irony is that in the cabaret community there's so little money people will pay attention even if you buy them a drink. Just showing up and paying the cover, you're a welcome presence."

By last fall, Loan was growing increasingly frenetic—making deals, throwing lavish parties, travelling to Europe, even co-sponsoring a benefit at the Bottom Line for victims of the World Trade Center attacks. "Things started to snowball at the end," deRoy said. "At one point, I said, 'Unless you've got some kind of bottomless pit, slow down.' "

Then came the big surprise. Loan's arrest has left a lot of performers, and their projects, in a state of limbo. The masters for Mac Rae's "I Choose Love" are stuck at the manufacturers, with no one to pay for their transfer to disk; Jessica Molaskey's "Pentimento" remains unavailable, although it was the d.j. Jonathan Schwartz's "most satisfying" album of 2001. Remarkably, few of Loan's artists seem terribly angry. Most of them describe Loan as sweet, kind, shy, unassuming, and naïve. Mac Rae calls him "egoless."

At the moment, Loan is being held at Rikers Island, on a million dollars' bail. He faces a possible sentence of up to twenty-five years. Friends are concerned that he is ill suited for prison life, but Loan's criminal attorney, Arthur Aidala, said that his client, though worried, is doing fine.

"He's like the twelve-year-old kid who goes to sleepaway camp," Aidala said. "The first couple of days are horrible, but then you make a few friends and settle in." Aidala said that his client will plead not guilty.

Last week, Heather Mac Rae recalled how Loan had encouraged her to go beyond her theatrical and cabaret roots, assuring her, "I don't care who your parents are—I think you're wonderful." She, in turn, told him that he could get to be as big as Clive Davis or Ahmet Ertegun, to which he replied, "Who are they?"

—*Adam Green*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE
GUNS VS. BUTTER

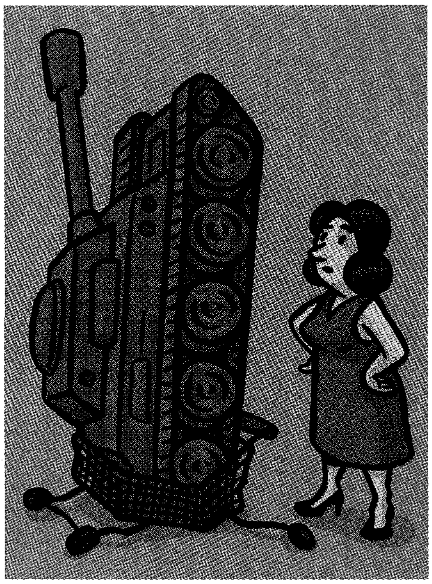
A year ago, a glum Silicon Valley executive, seeing recession on the horizon, told me, "Only a war can save us now." Well, we got one and, with it, the supposedly resuscitative burst of government spending he had in mind.

President Bush, in his new budget, has called for the biggest increase in defense spending in twenty years. If you listen to those who believe, as *Time* recently put it, that "war is good for the economy," this infusion of federal money will enhance not only our national security but our economic security as well.

It's a comforting thought, and, in the short run, there might be something to it. Boosting defense spending will put to work some of the people and machines that have been rendered idle by recession. But this kind of stimulus spending is like adrenaline: it works best in small, targeted doses. Bush's proposed defense-budget increases are big and wide-ranging. If the Pentagon gets everything it's asking for, defense spending will be forty-five per cent (or a hundred and twenty billion dollars) higher than it was three years ago. Whatever the strategic merits of the proposed defense budget, it can't be justified on economic grounds. Over time, defense spending stunts, rather than stimulates, economic growth.

Consider the much heralded peace dividend of the nineteen-nineties. It turned out to be even bigger and more consequential than anyone imagined. With the end of the Cold War, defense spending fell from more than six per cent of the G.D.P. to around three per cent. This allowed the government to balance its books, which helped push down long-term interest rates, which, in turn, made it cheaper for American businesses to invest in new products and factories. What's more, people who had previously been working on stuff only the Pentagon could use were suddenly free to invent and develop stuff civilians might want. The brain trust turned its attention from guns to butter. Between 1994 and 2000, the percentage of research and development that was financed by the government fell to its lowest point ever. Corporate R. & D., meanwhile, accelerated by 8.5 per cent a year. Productivity rates jumped to levels not seen since the nineteen-sixties, fuelling the longest economic expansion in America's history.

Does increased defense spending take up resources that would otherwise be put to more productive use? Yes. There aren't enough smart engineers and scientists to go around. When the Pentagon ramps up spending, it lures many of them out of the private sector and diverts laboratories and factories to military production. During the Reagan era, the percentage of scientists, engineers, and technical professionals who were working on defense projects was nearly twice what it was during the Clinton years. The business world could have used all that talent.



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

The diversion of resources to military production wouldn't hurt the economy if the Pentagon were efficient. A company like Intel has to make the most of every dollar it spends, or risk being surpassed by its competitors. But the Pentagon doesn't really have competitors. It feels no outside pressure to be efficient. As Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said in a speech on September 10th, the Pentagon is "one of the last bastions of central planning." And we all know how well central planning works.

It's true that in the past defense spending fostered what economists call "spillovers." (Someone has a great idea—Henry Ford and the moving assembly line—and that idea spills over into other companies and industries.) In the eighteen-twenties, for example, government armories became the first factories in the United States to make products with entirely interchangeable parts, ushering in the age of modern manufacturing. After the Second World War, the Defense Department helped develop the integrated circuit and the jet airliner. The Internet arose out of a Pentagon project that began in 1969.

In recent decades, though, military spending has created fewer spillovers. One reason is that American industry, pushed by tougher foreign competition, now invests and invents more on its own. But another reason is that the needs of the military are increasingly unconnected to the needs of everyone else. In the fifties, jet-engine innovations benefitted not only the strategic bombers and military transports they were designed for but commercial planes as well. Today, the technology that allows a stealth bomber to evade enemy radar, or helps a Navy pilot handle an extra g or two, hasn't done much to improve the lot of civilians en route to LAX. If anything, innovation tends to spill backward these days, with the military finding new uses for technologies developed by civilian businesses. As Rumsfeld himself said in his September 10th speech, "The Department of Defense was once an engine of technological innovation. Today, the private sector is leading the way."

Of course, you spend money on defense in order to strengthen the military, not the economy. Yet as Congress debates the Bush defense budget, which includes tens of billions of dollars for pork-barrel projects of dubious military value, it might want to remember what the President said the other day: "Every budget reflects fundamental choices." If you're spending almost four hundred billion dollars on defense, you're choosing national security over economic security, whether you realize it or not. In his State of the Union address last week, Bush said that he would spend "whatever it costs" to defend the country. Down the line, that could cost us more than we know.

—*James Surowiecki*

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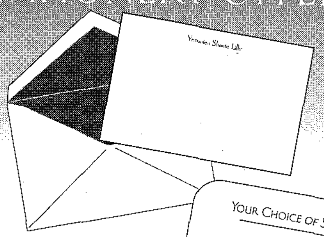

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Sebastien Marcovici at Mill Lane, photographed by Rosanne Olson ©2001.

ANNALS OF ENTERTAINMENT

IS IT FUNNY YET?

Jon Stewart and the comedy of crisis.

BY TAD FRIEND

Stewart's humor, he says, "comes from the center." Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

One evening last November, Jon Stewart leaned on his anchor's desk and chatted with the audience before taping an episode of "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart." The show, which airs on Comedy Central, is a news-parody program, and Stewart was being quizzed about the war in Afghanistan. Someone asked if he would have John Ashcroft as a guest. "No," Stewart said with regret, as if he were preparing to explain the intricacies of trying to book the Attorney General. "Technically, Ashcroft is not allowed to stand next to a Jew. We're like Kryptonite to him."

That night's guest, Stewart went on to say, would be David Halberstam, the author of "War in a Time of Peace," a new book about America's isolationism during the nineteen-nineties. The applause was tepid: the crowd, mostly Fordham University students who live near

SABA

the studio where the show is taped, in Hell's Kitchen, seemed to fear an unscheduled lecture. Stewart, who can read a crowd's mood as if it were stencilled on cue cards, instantly said, "We did that because of all the E-mails from you kids, saying, 'Yes, Felicity's nice, but what about Halberstam?' "

Stewart's guests have traditionally been entertainers like Ted Danson and Stephen Baldwin, who show up to plug their latest projects for four minutes. But since September 11th "The Daily Show," which airs Monday through Thursday nights at eleven o'clock, has been transforming itself nearly every day. The show won an Emmy for its writing about the last Presidential campaign, which Stewart and Bob Dole dissected in a regular feature called "Indecision 2000: Choose and Lose"; and after the terrorist attacks it became even sharper. Guests who could discuss the war were the norm—even as the show hammered the media's endless examination of the crisis, in segments with such titles as "Operation Enduring Coverage," "Operation Self-Congratulation," and "America Freaks Out."

When the taping began, Stewart breezed through a few jokes about the day's top news stories and then welcomed Halberstam, a silver-haired eminence in a dark suit. Though Stewart asked deft questions, Halberstam showed no interest in entering into the terse give-and-take that television requires. "The oceans, which had become ponds because of the nuclear war," he intoned, "had become oceans again." Just offstage, the show's head writer, Ben Karlin, rolled his eyes at the executive producer, Madeleine Smithberg. When Stewart finally heard a stray appositive—"what my colleague Les Gelb calls 'teacup wars' "—he pounced.

"Yes, but I've always found Les Gelb to just be a blowhard," Stewart said. Halberstam raised a wintry eyebrow. Moments later, Stewart was bidding farewell: "It's a beautiful read"—he'd admitted earlier that he hadn't read the book—"and, as always, great to see you."

"We've never met before!" Halberstam protested. Then he laughed, seeing, finally, that, unlike every other talk show he's been on, "The Daily Show" is not even insincerely sincere.

After the taping, Stewart walked over to Ned Kelly's, a nearby pub, to have dinner. He had changed out of his suit and tie into a T-shirt and jeans, a black leather jacket, and a blue watch cap. Five feet seven inches tall and compact, Stewart, who is thirty-nine, looks like a college kid, except that his hair is now a distinguished gray. He is conventionally handsome, and yet his face is all nose and recessed, worried-looking brown eyes. When he was the host of "The Jon Stewart Show," on MTV in 1993-94, he was so anxious and so prone to catch colds that his staff called him Susceptible Boy.

"Jon is a neurotic nut," his friend Adam Resnick says. "But being around him is very calming—he's not unlike a good dog." Though he quit his fraternity at William & Mary after six months because he hated the enforced friendships and the hazing, he still exudes a fraternal "Need a hand with that keg?" air. He calls his colleagues "chief" and shakes the cameramen's hands after each show. When he was guest hosting "The Late Late Show," in Los Angeles, he would sometimes sneak friends into the empty "The Price Is Right" studio, downstairs, and let them spin the big wheel.

That playfulness informs his celebrity interviews. "Usually, we clearly don't give a shit and neither do the guests," Stewart said, chewing a bacon cheeseburger. "With someone like David Halberstam, though, I'd like to have an actual, non-anarchy-oriented conversation. But there's always my unfortunate Krusty-the-Clown instinct, which is heightened because I can hear the audience, hear a hundred people breathing and going"—he parted his lips and gave an expectant simper. "So when it's been fifteen seconds and I've heard no laughter, I go, 'Look! Look at my nipples!'

"My comedy is not the comedy of the neurotic," he continued. "It comes from the center. But it comes from feeling displaced from society *because* you're in the center. We're the group of fairness, common sense, and moderation. We're clearly the disenfranchised center"—he savored the phrase—"because we're not in charge. Like, if we were in charge at ABC we'd never put on a show like '20/20 Downtown,' which is the worst example of trying to figure out what the kids love—'Oh, let's give them the same shit in a black leather jacket.' I was watching Barbara Walters at the '20/20' desk, and it just looked like there was nothing going on in there—you imagine a calliope song playing in her head." He began to hum a mindless ditty.

Stewart's center, in other words, is situated not between the right and the left but between the top (our leaders) and the bottom (crappy TV). Although only a few members of "The Daily Show" 's staff of sixty acknowledge voting for George Bush, the show is not partisan. Rather, it treats politics as simply a subcategory of entertainment. Accordingly, every passionate utterance by a President or passionate clinch in a Meg Ryan movie is examined not for its underlying value—its relevance as a statement of conviction or aesthetics—but for its comic visual or aural or contextual similarity to an earlier pop-culture relic. The fact that Osama bin Laden was one of fifty-two children becomes the crucial detail to know about him, because it can be turned into a joke about the Kennedy family (so many kids!), a deck of cards (Osama's a joker!), or the otherwise forgettable seventies show "Eight Is Enough" (so many kids!).

This world view, which solemnizes the values of irony, bemusement, and an unholy retention of "Diff'rent Strokes" trivia, both mocks and embraces the mainstream "Lethal Weapon 2" culture. Stewart manages to skewer cultural waste, arrogance, and cupidity without making his viewers feel ashamed. As he put it, "The disenfranchised center is upset that the extremes control the agenda in disproportionate ways because the extremes care more, they're passionate. Whereas the disenfranchised center doesn't give a shit if gay people get married—it would neither stop them nor stand up for them."

"But you give a shit," I said. This was not a topic he wanted to pursue.

"The audience doesn't," he replied. Stewart is very fast. Not long ago, the actor Rob Morrow was on the show, and he mentioned that he'd named his daughter Tu Morrow, preserving a family tradition of puns. He added that his wife's name was Debbon Ayer. Stewart promptly said, "I believe I know her sister, Frigid." He is such a natural host that Comedy Central's president and C.E.O., Larry Divney, worries that Stewart will be offered a network talk show soon, one that will pay much more than his present salary of one and a half million dollars.

But when Stewart is off camera he is off the grid. To a host, everyone is a guest who might overstay his welcome. Stewart doesn't have an E-mail address, and when I asked him why, he seemed puzzled. "Don't you find people contact you way more?" Rather than socialize, he prefers to do crosswords, watch "SportsCenter," or hang out at home with his wife, Tracey McShane, and their cat and two dogs. He is essentially a high-functioning hermit.

"When I tended bar, after college, I was always happier behind the bar, not out rocking to the band," Stewart told me. "People would be singing along to 'Mony, Mony,' waving their arms and shouting that chant they all knew, 'Something-Something-Get-Fucked,' and I'd be on the sidelines, thinking, Even drunk, I've never had that much fun in my life."

After the terrorist attacks, Stewart, like most residents of New York City, was in shock. "I live downtown," he told me, "and our cat carrier was packed and at the door. I felt sick, I didn't want to eat. I felt like I imagine a person feels when he's depressed."

The staff of "The Daily Show" reassembled at its offices two days later. "We all felt that our lives were meaningless," Ben Karlin said. "Because of the virulent hatred toward the West, you're suddenly aware that we're just disgusting consumers: twenty-five per cent of the world's energy consumption, with five per cent of the world's population." The first question the staff addressed was whether the show could ever go back on the air; after a few days, the focus shifted to when and how. The news was too devastating to ridicule (the program usually begins with a segment called "Headlines," which involves video clips and jokes), and there wasn't even a lame directive from the suits upstairs to scoff at. Comedy Central, a joint venture between Viacom and AOL Time Warner, has so little oversight from its corporate bosses that Tom Freston, the show's supervisor at Viacom, calls it "the latchkey kid." (The program's only real stricture is that the word "dildo" can't be used more than three times per show.)

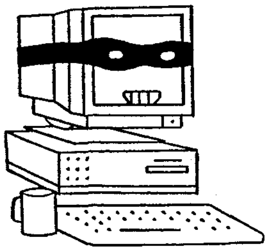
Stewart finally decided that on September 20th he would welcome viewers back with a monologue about his own thoughts and feelings. "I needed to lance the boil," he said.

That idea would probably not have occurred to Craig Kilborn, who was behind the desk when "The Daily Show" began, in 1996. Kilborn was a blow-dried blond anchor mocking blow-dried blond anchors. The tone of his show was fast, smug, and mean. When the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing was sentenced, in 1997, Kilborn noted that the towers' offices were filled with stockbrokers, and concluded with a smirk, "Officials speculate that if the bombing had gone according to plan it would have taken a quarter of a million lives—and ten or twenty souls."

After Kilborn left to host CBS's "The Late Late Show," in December of 1998, Stewart replaced him the following month. Stewart had been poised to break out for years, first as a standup comedian and then in a series of short-lived jobs such as hosting "The Jon Stewart Show," guest hosting "The Late Late Show," and acting on "The Larry Sanders Show." But the promise had stalled. He had lost to Conan O'Brien in the derby to replace Letterman on "Late Night," and Kilborn had beaten him out for "The Late Late Show" job. Stewart was in danger of becoming another Gilbert Gottfried or Dana Carvey: talented comedians who never found the right vessel and just faded away.

A few months into his tenure, after the show had savaged the occasion of the Barbie doll's fortieth anniversary, Stewart convened his ten writers, most of whom were holdovers from the Kilborn era. "Half the jokes were about Barbie as a bad role model for girls, and the other half were about how ugly the spokesmodel was," he said. "I told the writers, 'We have got to straighten out our point of view here. From now on, it's not going to be adjectival humor, where Monica Lewinsky is "the portly pepper pot," but about how we really feel.' There were some strains" —only three of those ten writers remain—"but we got it working."

"We strive for some significance now," J. R. Havlan, one of the writers who stayed on, says. "But we'll still point out that Hamid Karzai looks like Ben Kingsley." "The Daily Show" is now watched by seven hundred thousand people each night, twice the number of viewers under Kilborn.



Because Stewart is so circumspect, no one on the show knew quite what to expect from his September 20th monologue. The program began without its customary portentous music or swooping camera angles. Viewers simply saw Stewart at his desk, his hands fiddling with his pen. He explained that he was there because "they said to get back to work. And there were no jobs available for a man in the fetal position, under his desk, crying, which I gladly would have taken." Then, tearing up a little, he said, "I wanted to tell you why I grieve, but why I don't despair." His voice broke, and he paused for a few seconds to collect himself.

Extending a hand toward the camera, as if to pull himself through it and into his viewers' living rooms, Stewart said that one of his first memories, when he was five, was the day Martin Luther King, Jr., was shot. The ongoing recovery effort at Ground Zero, he said, was King's dream, realized. "We are judging people not by the color of their skin but the content of their character. . . . To see these firefighters, these guys from all over the country, literally with buckets rebuilding, that, that is, that's extraordinary—and that's why we've already won." He settled himself again, then brought the monologue, which had lasted nine minutes, to a close. "The view from my apartment was the World Trade Center. Now it's gone. . . . But you know what the view is now? The Statue of Liberty." He smiled, asking forgiveness for his rocky state. "You can't beat that."

Many members of "The Daily Show" 's staff were stirred by Stewart's openness; clearly, he had surprised himself as well. After the commercial break, he came back with his makeup refreshed and said, "Hey, you know what's nice? A good cry. I feel like Robin Williams in 'Bicentennial Man.' " He took on the round-eyed look of a robot puzzled by newfound emotions: "I—I can feel love!"

Even though the September 20th show established Stewart as someone to trust and turn to, a national figure, he says he'll never watch it again. "A few days afterward, Howard Stern was busting on me on the radio for crying on the air," he says sheepishly. "I called in and he played

MOST SPEED-SKATING VICTORIES COME DOWN TO 1/100TH OF A SECOND. THIS ONE TOOK OVER A DECADE.

Of all the Olympic stories about perseverance, few are as memorable as that of Dan Jansen.

The world first met Jansen at the '84 Games in Sarajevo, when the relatively unknown American placed an impressive 4th in the 500-meter race.

By Calgary in '88, he was favored to win the 500- and 1,000-meter races.

But fate had other plans.

Jansen's sister had been suffering from leukemia and died just minutes before race time. In his final conversation with her, he promised to win in her honor. But instead Jansen fell. Not just once but in both races. He left Calgary empty-handed.

Four years later Jansen was again favored to win, this time in Albertville. But after a disappointing performance he again left without a medal.

In 1994, Jansen prepared for his fourth Olympic Games, in Lillehammer. He knew it would be his last chance and hoped he could put his past behind him once and for all. But on his first race, to the horror of everyone watching, Jansen slipped yet again during the 500 and finished 8th.

Only one race remained. The last of his career.

Four days after that unfortunate fall, the starting gun sounded for the start of the 1,000. And everything magically fell into place. A decade of disappointment suddenly was erased as Jansen took first place and set a new world record.

During the victory lap, he picked up his daughter and carried her around the ice. They had named her Jane, in honor of his late sister. The perfect ending to a story that has become an inspiration to athletes around the world. **CELEBRATE HUMANITY.**

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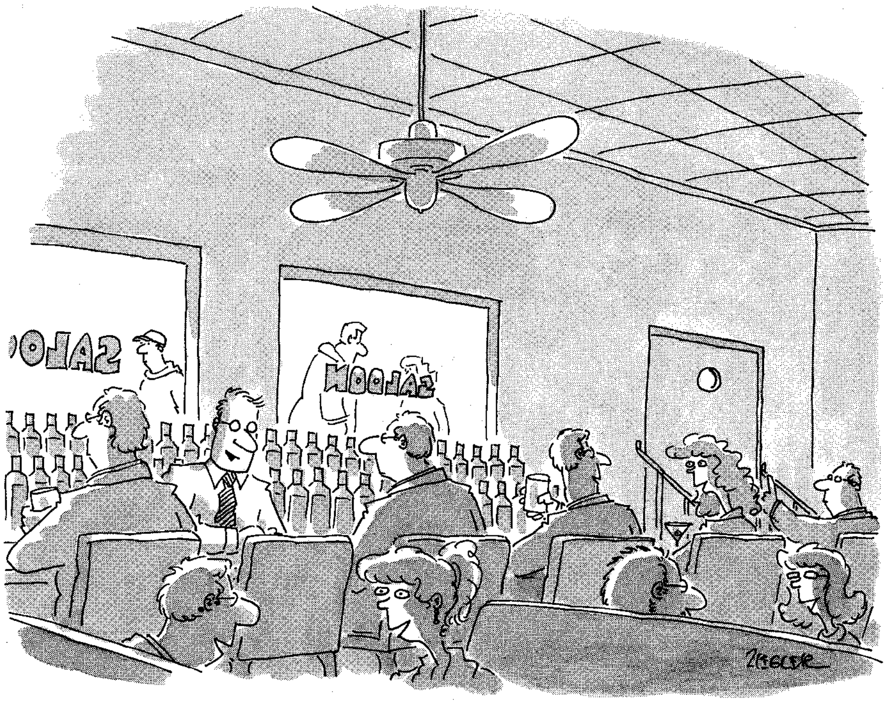

"My 401(k) is safe. It's tied up in booze futures."

• •

me portions of it, and it was horrible to listen to. When I did it, it felt great. Two days later, it sounded like a cat running into a fan. I finally told Howard that that night I happened to be ovulating."

In the days after Stewart's return to the air, his show wasn't so funny. The following week, he conducted long, sober interviews with Frank Rich, Aaron Brown, and Jeff Greenfield about the state of America's soul, and his "Headlines" were labored riffs on video clips of a Chinese panda's birthday and the Fox special "Who Wants to Be a Princess?" A sense of irrelevance and apology hovered over the entire effort; in the nine days that the show was off the air, twenty-five per cent of its viewers had departed for such channels as Nick at Nite. It was not a hospitable time for comedy. In early October, "Saturday Night Live" tried a few one-liners about Bush, which didn't go over with the audience during dress rehearsal, and a bin Laden joke that hushed the room. The lines were snipped from the final show.

It wasn't until October 3rd that "The Daily Show" tiptoed back toward topicality, in a piece suggesting that among the disguises bin Laden might adopt was a Jennifer Aniston wig. The next day, Stewart showed pictures of the MSNBC correspondent Ashleigh Banfield before and after she went to Islamabad: "As you can see, by darkening her hair, making it slightly shorter, she has effectively eliminated any problems a woman might have in a radical fundamentalist regime." When Americans became obsessed with anthrax, the show ran a CNN-like ticker at the bottom of the screen that said, "91 Percent of Americans 'Want Mommy,'" "Chicken Little: 'The Sky Is Falling!,'" and "Oh God Oh God Oh—"

To the surprise of everyone on "The Daily Show," the number of viewers quickly rose to the show's pre-September 11th level: it turned out that there was an appetite for silly jokes about life-and-death matters. The media's lack of proportion, which proliferated as the war did, clarified the show's new enemy: anyone who terrifies, offends, or panders to Americans, from Al Qaeda to Tom Ridge. When the "home video" of bin Laden taking credit for the attacks surfaced, one of the show's correspondents, Stephen Colbert, reporting "live from outside the White House"—actually, from the studio, with a green-screen image of the White House behind him—told viewers that the official response to the video was "Fuck you, you fucking cocksucker!" (The censor's bleeps were ineffectual.) He added that the White House planned to clone bin Laden after capturing him, "so that each year a fresh bin Laden can be executed during the Super Bowl halftime."

It was in this atmosphere of renewed confidence that, at eleven-thirty one morning in early December, Stewart convened his daily meeting. Also present in his office were Madeleine Smithberg, Ben Karlin, and Stewart's brown mutt, Monkey, which snored quietly on the couch. The morning's big news was that the American turncoat John Walker Lindh had been captured in Afghanistan.

"I just feel bad for Walker's parents," Smithberg said. "He goes missing and all of a sudden turns up in the Taliban."

Stewart assumed the tones of a bewildered parent: "'She said she was going on spring break, and the next thing we knew she was turning tricks in Seattle.'" He paused. "We should do this as 'Less Than Zero': 'You don't know what it's like to grow up wealthy!'"

"To come from tony suburbs," Karlin suggested.

"Easy for you to judge," Smithberg began, and Stewart finished, "*You* came from a broken home."

On the muted television near Stewart's cluttered desk, CNN was showing footage of Palestinians killed by Israeli counterattacks after the latest round of suicide bombings. "Oh, God," Stewart said softly. "Aw, Jesus Christ," Smithberg said. Everyone watched in silence.

A minute later, Joie Chen appeared onscreen, talking with a military expert as they both stood on the network's huge map of South Asia. "In Mazar-i-Sharif, they're looking right up her skirt," Stewart said.

"Standing on their country," Karlin said. "It's the perfect manifestation of U.S. imperialism!" Karlin, who is thirty, was the editor of the satirical newspaper *The Onion* in the mid-nineties. He has a round face and dark-blond curls and often wears black turtlenecks, which combine to give him the look of an angry folksinger. On his bulletin board is pinned a *USA Today* clipping in which President Bush says that he would never ask Americans to conserve energy. Karlin has circled a quote from the White House press secretary Ari Fleischer: "The

American way of life is a blessed one."

Stewart and Karlin finish each other's jokes and are in near-perfect synch. But, while Karlin tends to push for fiercer barbs, Stewart often goes for big laughs, a quantity reverentially known among the show's staff as "the funny." "Ben is more passionate and can be disappointed more easily," Stewart told me. "He makes me feel like the old chief, who smiles at the young brave's idealism and passion." When the show did send up CNN's map, it had two correspondents touching points on the landscape with their hands and feet, pretzeling around each other in a game of Twister. American imperialism was not mentioned.

Two hours later, Stewart and Karlin were watching Fox News footage of a Geraldo Rivera report from Taloqan, Afghanistan. For five minutes, Rivera deployed the thin and shivering children of the town as a silent backdrop while he mugged and showed viewers his down sleeping bag. He made slaphappy cracks about how uncivilized the locals were, lamenting that they "have no regard for the sanctity of the press," and then he blustered about the dangers he faced. Under questioning from the anchor in New York, Rivera finally admitted, coyly, that he was carrying a gun.

When the tape ended, Stewart and Karlin sat in silence. "No regard for the sanctity of the press," Stewart finally said. "That's good, from Rivera." He had his face in his hands. "You know, he said that he hoped the war wouldn't be over before he got there. What kind of retard says that? Let's bring in the writers."

Upstairs, in a small, bare office, five of the writers watched the Geraldo tape over and over. Everyone rocked and stared at the ceiling, and then someone would try a joke and the room would burst into motion—tweaking, rephrasing, rejecting—before the autism of furious thought resumed.

Finally, a writer named David Javerbaum said, "The four most dreaded words in journalism: 'Geraldo's got a gun.'" Everyone laughed, and another writer typed the joke into the script. "Second most dreaded," he prompted. Javerbaum rocked and concentrated: "Blitzer's at the keg."

At 5:30 P.M., after the dress rehearsal, and while a comic warmed up the crowd, Stewart, Karlin, and Smithberg huddled in the greenroom, still tinkering with the Geraldo jokes. Stewart said, "How about we show Geraldo laughing and I come back and say, 'Ha-ha-ha. Those kids were . . . starving.'"

"Great!" Karlin said, seeming relieved that Stewart was willing to take a direct shot at Rivera's insensitivity.

At the taping, the "Geraldo's got a gun" line got a long, hard laugh. But Stewart wasn't entirely satisfied. "The beauty of the Geraldo tape was watching the whole thing," he said later, "so it was a relatively untenable comedic situation. We just had to extract what we could, play it, and frown. But we also didn't want to seem too outraged. That's the mistake we made doing 'Who Wants to Be a Princess?,' because a Fox show is not exploitative, really, not in the sense of Sudanese slavery. Geraldo's almost too easy to make fun of, and we have worthier targets." He paused. "But we do have a new tape of him saying that if Aaron Brown had been in his shoes in Afghanistan he 'would poop his pants.' So we've got to get that out there."

Ten days later, on a cold, sleety afternoon, Stewart was having his usual cheeseburger and Coke at Ned Kelly's. As he ate, a construction worker came over. "My sister *loves* you," he said to Stewart. "Could you sign a Christmas note to her?"

"Oh, really?" Stewart said, waggling his eyebrows like Groucho Marx. He wrote a note and signed it in John Hancock-size cursive, and shook his fan's hand. When he left, Stewart leaned over and whispered, "You know, I did fuck his sister, and she was great." Then he wrung his right hand cautiously. "The guy has hands like a maul. He's going to come out on the street and go"—he sniffed his hand—"'Oil of Olay? What is he, a florist?'"

A hint of Stewart's earlier comic persona, from his club days, came through in that joke: the timorous outsider. Or, as Stewart rephrased it when I put it that way, "You mean the short, hairy, big-nosed, picked-on Jew?" In the mid-nineties, Stewart had a routine in which he observed that when blacks and Jews fight it only plays into the ruling class's plan. "Jews and blacks, we should get together," he'd say, "and get whitey!" I men-

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tioned the Ashcroft-Jews joke that Stewart had made off camera, and asked him if he'd say that on the air. "No," he said, "because it states the premise."

Now that he has a wider audience, I wondered, perhaps he steers toward the ecumenical—if disenfranchised—center.

"I see where this is going," Stewart said. "You're suggesting that there's a bagel-size chip on my shoulder?" He thought for a second, and went on carefully, "I didn't grow up in Warsaw, but it's not like it wasn't duly noted by my peers that that's who I was—there were some minor slurs." Born Jonathan Stewart Leibowitz, in New York City, Stewart grew up in Lawrence Township, New Jersey, a solidly middle-class enclave that lacked a synagogue or a Jewish presence. He recalls being called "Leibotits" and "Leiboshits," and getting punched out at the bus stop when he was in the seventh grade. "I was holding my books and a trellis I had made in shop and thinking, How much more of a pussy can I be?"

When Stewart was twelve, his parents divorced. His friends say that he was deeply shaken by the breakup, and by his subsequent failure to find common ground with his father, who is a physicist. Stewart's mother, Marian, says that her son's riffs about the family are just "his humor." She told me, "On 'The Jon Stewart Show,' he broadcast reports from the Olympics by his mother, as David Letterman did—only Jon's mother was played as a go-go dancer. Now, am I a go-go dancer? Of course not," said Marian, who is an educational consultant.

Stewart, after graduating with a degree in psychology, took a series of eccentric jobs, among them staging puppet shows about the disabled for New Jersey public-school children. "I was a little lost from the age of eighteen to twenty-four," he said. "I had my midlife crisis early. In 1986, I was living in Hamilton, New Jersey, working for the state and bartending and playing on a landscape company's softball team. I started thinking, This is it for the next seventy years? So I told my mom I was going to New York to do comedy. I never discussed it with the—what's the other one called?—dad."

Stewart says that his father has never seen him perform. Marian Leibowitz said, "All Jon had ever done was host the high-school talent show, so his father said it was a ridiculous idea. I didn't *say* it, but I figured, New York City is an hour and a half away, he'll be back soon enough."

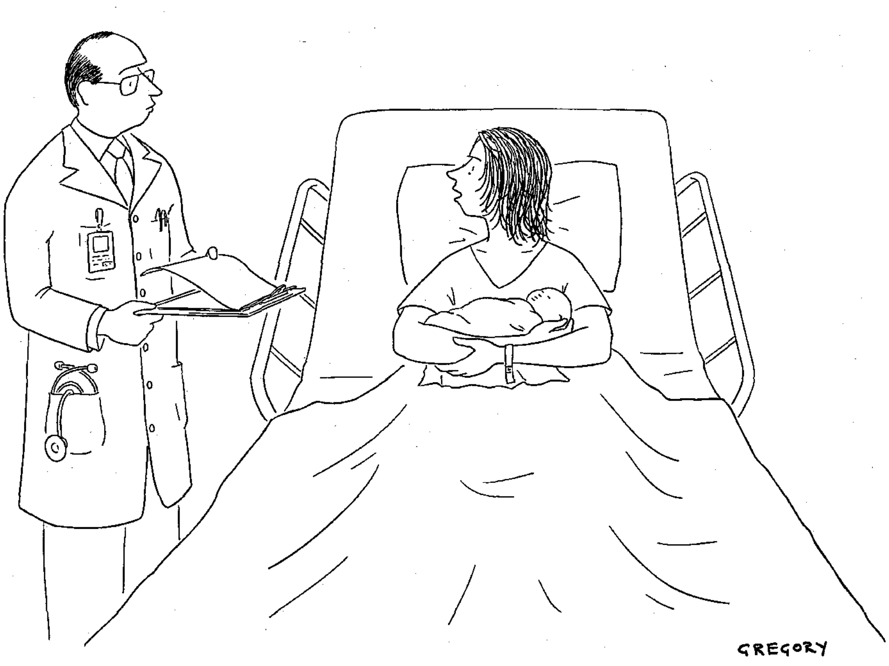
On his second night of doing standup at a Manhattan club called the Bitter End, Stewart changed his name. He explained, "The host's hesitation at trying to pronounce my name the first night bothered me. And," he continued, hesitantly, "there was slight leftover resentment at the taunting. You don't want a tauntable handle in show business. And"—Stewart's instinct for privacy and his instinct for honesty wrestled at even greater length—"some leftover resentment at my family." His face was blank, drained of its antic warmth. He added quickly, "But I didn't really change my name—I just shortened it. I didn't want to go as far as making it Dirk Cloud, or Poopy Joe, the Rodeo Clown."

A white-haired woman who was passing our table on her way out, after a few afternoon cocktails, stopped and took Stewart's arm. She leaned over to talk to him, and, from the confiding way in which she mentioned her recent eightieth birthday, they might have been old Ned Kelly's pals. But it was not so. "Be careful on the way home," Stewart said, as she buttoned her coat and aimed herself at the street. Then he turned to me and said, "You know, I was this close to fucking her. She almost fell on my penis." He shook his head in genuine amusement. "I just learned more about her than I know about anyone," he said. "Her husband has Alzheimer's, she comes here for a couple of pops so she doesn't have to drink alone, she prefers vodka, and I even know she's a Sagittarius. The only thing she didn't do was pitch her project—'When's your movie coming out?' "

The next time I saw Stewart, in his office, he said, "Hey! My mom says you called her a kike." I responded that I'd watched his movie "Playing by Heart" the night before. He did a graceful spit take of his Coke, back into the glass. "Playing by Heart," which was released in 1998, is a pallid romantic comedy, and Stewart wears a stitched-on grin as he delivers such lines as "Call me nuts, Meredith, but I like you." In Danny DeVito's forthcoming movie "Death to Smoochy," Stewart is equally unremarkable as a craven television executive.

"You won't see me playing one of those retarded-man-raising-a-child roles," he said. Stewart understands that he is not an actor but a performer—someone who can deliver a heightened version of himself. "What I can do is look directly into the camera and tell you how I feel—'I have to apologize for that joke.' I'm not good at playing earnestness, but I feel that I am an earnest person."

Yet he resists using his anchor desk as



"How soon can I start her on fad diets?"

a bully pulpit. "The show is not a megaphone," Stewart said. "You can't end every joke with 'Let's bomb the motherfuckers,' even though that's how I feel. But I take some pleasure in just ridiculing Al Qaeda. When we got the Kandahar tape"—the bin Laden video—"our first instinct was to just lay down fart noises and let the tape run. Mock the Devil, because he hates to be laughed at."

Mocking the Devil is the response of a civilized man. Whether it's a sufficient response is another question. Ben Karlin said, "Our defining moment, with John McCain, represents both the triumph and the failure of our show." In late 1999, one of the show's correspondents, Steve Carell, boarded Senator McCain's campaign bus, the Straight Talk Express, and asked the candidate to name his favorite movie and his favorite book. Then, with no change in his expression, he asked McCain how he could reconcile his criticism of pork-barrel politics with the fact that "while you were chairman of the Commerce Committee, that committee set a record for unauthorized appropriations." For a long moment, McCain was speechless. Carell started laughing. "I'm just kidding!" he said. "I don't even know what that means!"

"That's a true fact, that question," Karlin said. "And McCain was caught in the headlights. But we punctured it with a joke, so all you're left with is funny and awkward. It's bittersweet."

For months after the interview, McCain played a tape of the exchange with Carell on the Straight Talk Express's video screen—a decision that does him credit. It also suggests that nowadays satire is often perceived by its target as a badge of honor, or, at worst, as simply another media mention or product placement. Larry Divney, Comedy Central's president, told me, "If the show is going to go after an advertiser, we call the advertiser with a heads up, but we tell him, 'If Jon is making fun of you, it's a *plus*. It means you're being talked about!'"

It bears remembering that "The Daily Show" and CNN, its frequent target, are both part of AOL Time Warner. Insofar as giant corporations plot world domination—and they do—AOL is using the show to extend the reach of its infotainment programming to a younger market segment. Don't care for CNN's news? Try our zesty "salsa" alternative, "The Daily Show"! But, while Ben Karlin agonizes about being what he calls "a corporate whore," Stewart calmly accepts his role. "Nobody should overestimate our punk-rock status," he told me. "To the extent that we're not completely ineffectual, we're complicit in the corporate scheme, which is about selling soap."

Before the taping that evening, Stewart checked in with Madeleine Smithberg in the greenroom. Everyone was tired—tired of being charmed by Rumsfeld, of trying to wring jokes out of the mess in the Tora Bora caves, of putting out a string of plucky shows. "Some days we surf along," Stewart said. "But today we were just"—he made a jackhammer motion. "All our initial reactions are past—the ticker, the anthrax, the Banfield."

"People walking on the map," Smithberg said.

"The stuff that leaped out. Now we're in the grind of it, every day. Nothing is presenting itself that purely anymore. The problem is, there's no definitive end." Stewart's voice trailed off. "We had a period of statesmanship—of governance without politics—and now the politics has returned, and the silliness. More jokes for us, but it's disappointing." By mid-January, the show was largely given over to the President's having choked on a pretzel.

Ben Karlin burst in. "Want to hear something amazing and sad?" he said. "I just heard from someone at Fox News that whenever we make fun of them, they all gather and watch. They love it!" Expecting more of a response, he waited. "But we *hate* them!"

Smithberg opened her eyes. "They think we're not making fun of them individually."

"But we are!" Karlin said. Stewart smiled at his young brave, and just then a producer knocked on the door and said that they were ready. The audience could be heard rumbling expectantly outside. Stewart got up, straightened his tie, sighed, then shook his head a few times to clear it, and grinned, looking like his old self. "O.K.," he said. "Let's go put on a show."

One sure sign that our country is returning to normal is that "The Daily Show" is back, and is being watched with pleasure by ever more Americans who, once again, could care less. ♦

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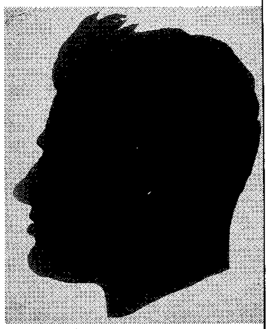

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LETTER FROM EUROPE

PRIVATE LIVES

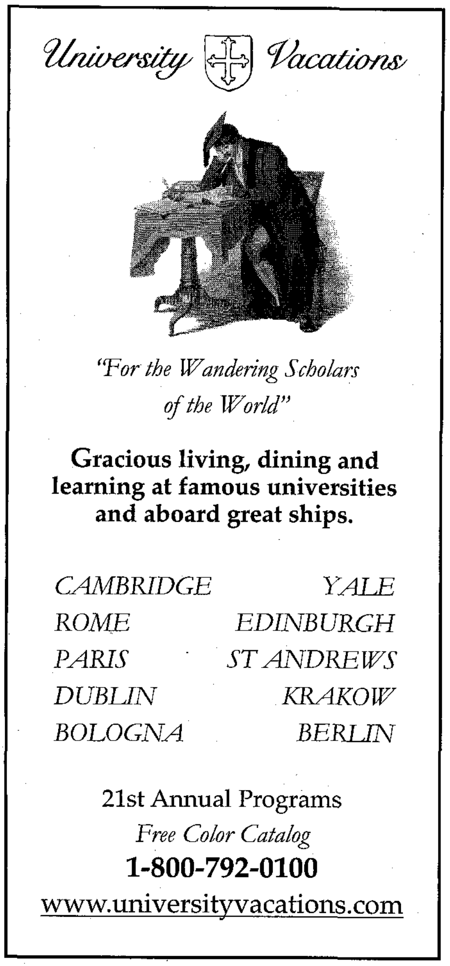
Germany's troubled war on terrorism.

BY JANE KRAMER

"Terror" isn't a simple word in Germany, and this winter, when I started trying to make sense of the arguments I'd heard in Berlin nearly every day since September 11th—arguments about whether it was racist to let policemen question Arab students or immoral to send support troops to Afghanistan—I was often referred to a large and, by the looks of it, abandoned construction site on Niederkirchnerstrasse, in Kreuzberg, the neighborhood where more than half of the capital's two hundred thousand Muslims live. All you can really see there are a couple of concrete stair and elevator cores that went up in 1998, just before work stopped on Topography of Terror, an archive and exhibition center planned for the site (and a building so dauntingly minimalist in design that no contractor could promise to bring it in on budget and, at the same time, guarantee that it would not fall down), and a row of stalls that have served as a temporary exhibit of that topography for the past four years. The exhibit is small, but there is nothing small about the curator's project, which is to recast the accepted "history of the perpetrators"—the history of the Führers—to include the ordinary men and women who went to the office every day on Niederkirchnerstrasse, back when the street was called Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse and the empty site was part of a vast complex that was headquarters to the Gestapo, the S.S., and the state-security police.

A few old Berliners still refer to the area as 8 Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse, the official address and, you could say, reception hall of Nazi state surveillance, and, of course, tourists know it by the name of the exhibit there now. But if you ask a Berlin cop or, for that matter, an intelligence agent trying to come to terms with the evidence that Al Qaeda terrorists are still "sleeping" comfortably in German cities, including possibly his own, he will call it "the reason," and sometimes even "the good reason," those sleepers are around, because it holds the memory of a scrutiny so chilling that today's Germans go to great lengths to protect themselves from the policemen and "intelligence connections" (the official euphemism for spies) they hire to protect them from one another. In western Germany, where some eighty per cent of the population lives, the right to nearly absolute civil and personal privacy amounts to a state theology, part of the canon of the Good German, along with the "right" not to fight, even in a just cause, and the "right" not to acknowledge that by September 11th the "lessons of German history" had become a trope that could be put to shrewd political uses.

Within a few days of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, most Germans knew that at least three of the nineteen terrorists suspected of having hijacked the planes had been living in Hamburg—including the Egyptian student Mohamed Atta, who is said to have masterminded the attacks. Within a few weeks, they knew that Osama bin Laden's German network had probably included as many as seventy other sleepers spread across most of the big cities of western Germany, and that one hijacker had even been traced to a town in eastern Germany, a part of the country not known for extending hospitality or, for that matter, much in the way of safety to strangers. Within a few months, they learned that, in the fall of 2000, their national intelligence service had asked the agents at Hamburg's state service to put a watch on the apartment where Atta and another man on the suicide mission lived. The request had been either ignored or refused. But what no one knows, even now, is the extent to which the gaps in German security—which were no greater than our own,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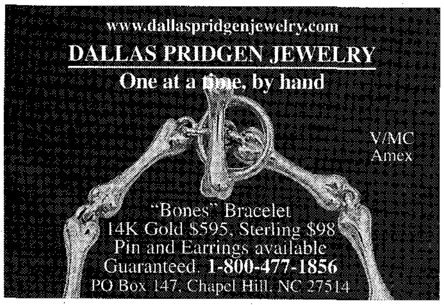
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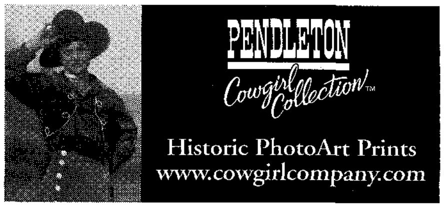
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merely different, as custom and law were different—were a matter of indifference or turf or sloppy intelligence or a weakness in the law or, simply, a reluctance of spies and policemen to be seen behaving like spies and policemen, and a reluctance of politicians to be accused of Gestapo tactics or Stasi tactics or (if they were from eastern Germany and had *been* Stasi) of American or "Zionist" tactics. Power in Germany is still so cautiously divided that you would have to put most of the country's police and domestic-intelligence services together to arrive at anything analogous in its Draconian scope to the F.B.I., and on September 11th none of those services had much access to the other's data, or even to the warnings about a new generation of Islamic terrorists that German field agents claim to have been sending home from the Middle East for at least ten years.

Spies and policemen are reluctant to be seen behaving like spies and policemen.

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Since the Second World War, the most revered word in western Germany has been "transparency," and it is used today to mean that the workings of the unified, democratic German state are going to be as transparent as the new glass dome that lets daylight into the Reichstag's parliamentary chamber. The kinds of deals that politicians in other countries negotiate with the doors closed are public here. This was something that rattled the Americans who began to arrive in Berlin in mid-September to work out what both countries called the "details of our coöperation"—coöperation meaning some agreement as to what Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's "unconditional support" for America's war on terror really meant when it came to extraditing suspects or accessing bank accounts or trading state secrets. If the Germans found the Americans' demands insufferably high-handed, and many Germans did, the Americans who came to "coöperate" learned in very short order that Germany's famous transparency had produced a rhetoric that was insufferably high-minded. And it wasn't just the Americans who got impatient. Europeans who came to discuss some sort of consistent and enforceable European Union counterterrorism policy were fascinated, exasperated, and occasionally even moved by the earnest discussions of right and wrong, good and evil, that seemed to pass for German crisis management. It was a nearly impossible project anyway, given the wildly varying definitions of civil liberty in Europe—not to mention the antagonisms between Europol, Interpol, and the intelligence services of fifteen different countries whose responses to September 11th have run a gamut from Britain's going to war to Belgium's refusing to release evidence to the F.B.I. But it's safe to say that most of those Europeans flew home grateful for their own closed doors.

By mid-November, when the government here nearly fell, over the morality (or immorality) of sending soldiers to Afghanistan, the French government had managed to avoid the war, and no one seemed to have noticed. Germany's police were still under attack because of the three Hamburg sleepers, but the British had long since buried the news that eleven September 11th terrorists had entered America from *their* country, where the only thing known about most of them was how effectively they had been able to disappear.

In a way, Germany's problem was simply a more "transparent" version of every other country's problem: how to respond to extraordinary times. Germany has a huge body of data-protection laws—by far the strictest of any E.U. country—and a network of data-protection agencies whose job it is to insure that, however transparent the state is to its citizens, the private lives of those citizens remain opaque. And in ordinary times they do, because data protection is part of the postwar political culture, as much a legacy of 8 Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse as the fact that hate speech is illegal, or, you could say, that freedom of speech is limited. (The tapes and literature that are the stock-in-trade of Germany's neo-Nazi skinheads come, inevitably, from America, proving the obvious point that one man's democracy can be another man's nightmare.) But the result has been that cells like Mohamed Atta's—collections of legal residents, sometime students, and visiting "businessmen," whose rights to privacy are the same as the rights of German citizens—in no way constituted the kinds of groups that, on September 11th, could legally be infiltrated, investigated, and shut down. Everyone involved in the Al Qaeda investigation has had, in some way, to accept this. August Hanning, the head of Germany's foreign-intelligence agency—it's called the Bundesnachrichtendienst, or the B.N.D.—joked about the situation to me by saying that there were a lot more clauses in the agency's bylaws about the information you had to protect than there were about the information you could use.

In late September, Otto Schily—the Interior Minister, and as such the man directly responsible for the government's domestic-intelligence service, the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, and its criminal police, the Bundeskriminalamt, or the B.K.A.—issued proposals for the first of two new packages of laws that would ostensibly cover the eccentric exigencies of German security in an Al Qaeda world. The proposals were culled from what one reporter called the "wishing wells" of police chiefs and spymasters stung by the fact that so many people seemed to be blaming them for what had happened to New York. But they were actually fairly tame when you compared them with the security laws already on the books in much of Western Europe, and certainly with the laws that John Ashcroft was contemplating for the United States. In the event, the three months of debate that followed were hardly tame. No one doubted that Germany had to find a way to identify and prosecute terrorists, but some people—most notably among the Greens in Schröder's "red-green" coalition—argued as if the choice for Germany had come down to Osama bin Laden or Heinrich Himmler. It was nearly Christmas before the Bundestag finally passed the second of the new security packages, and by then they were considerably milder than they'd been in the original drafts. The government called them "balanced," and in a way they were, since the concessions granted to the Interior Ministry (say, the right to include some sort of biometric data in passports and identity cards) had been pretty much countered by the demands of the Justice Ministry (none of that data would be entered into a central data bank).

Schily told me over a drink the night the first package passed that, to his mind, the problem was never the details—fingerprinting, screening visas, redefining the "reasonable" in reasonable suspicion, expanding data banks for policemen—so much as it was getting Germans to accept that "we are not the same place we were at the beginning of the First World War." His critics (who referred to the new laws as the Otto Catalogue, after Germany's thickest mail-order catalogue) prefer to say that it was Schily himself who was moving backward, because Schily had begun his career as a left-wing civil-rights lawyer. Thirty years ago, he was famous as the leading defense counsel at the first of the Baader-Meinhof trials. He eventually entered Parliament as a Green deputy, and his old friends feel doubly betrayed now that he is a Social Democratic Interior Minister, running the country's criminal police and drafting anti-terrorist laws that touch on their liberties as citizens.

Bernard Schoenbaum

"Come back, young man. He needs a booster shot."

But the truth is that some of the most important politicians in Germany today share something of Schily's history, and Germans expect them to. A radical youth is part of the bildungsroman of a liberal German political life, and the list of men and women who enjoyed one is long, starting with the Chancellor, who cut his political teeth as a student protester, and then as a lawyer representing, among others, a convicted terrorist who wanted to get out of prison, and to keep his own license to practice law when he did. (The terrorist has since been born again as the éminence grise of the National Democratic Party, or the N.P.D., a barely disguised neo-Nazi party that Schröder's government is working hard to ban.) Joschka Fischer, the Foreign Minister and arguably the country's reigning statesman, is so popular because of *his* radical past that last year, when old photographs of him punching a cop at a squatters' riot surfaced, no one outside the far right even suggested that he'd suffer in the polls. In fact, it was probably more damaging to Fischer's reputation that he started arguing last fall for the wisdom of a German military "contribution" to the American war on terror. The feeling among many of his admirers was either that Germany shouldn't have an army at all or that its Army could lend "support" but should actually enter Afghanistan only for "peacekeeping," leaving the war, and the blood, on American and British hands.

The reality is that there was never a question of Germans being sent to fight. The Americans didn't ask, and Germany didn't have the fighter planes or much in the way of specialized troops to offer, since, with a few exceptions, Germany has what Heiner Wegesin, who runs the Verfassungsschutz in Brandenburg, described to me as a "state-of-the-art nineteen-sixties army." Never mind that the Bundestag finally got in line behind Schröder and his Foreign Minister and voted to contribute thirty-nine hundred troops—including a hundred special forces, a medical corps, and a naval task force—some air transport, and a small fleet of chemical-sniffing Fuchs tanks to the Afghan war. No ground troops left Germany until the new government had been installed in Kabul and the U.N. peacekeeping force established, and no one had really expected that they would.

In a way, all the arguments about sending troops and passing security laws were simply Germany doing what it does best, having an identity crisis. But September 11th was different from the other crises of the past ten years—which involved committing peacekeeping troops to Bosnia, East Timor, Kosovo, and, most recently, Macedonia, in what were the first deployments of German soldiers since the Second World War—because it represented not just keeping the peace but acknowledging the option of fighting to make peace, even if it wasn't a question of Germans fighting. Sometimes, after a day of talking to politicians, I'd decide that the only accurate description of Germany's particular war on terror was the French poster hanging on the wall of the Paris Bar, the place to which fashionable Berlin politicians, including Schily, often repair after the same kind of day. It's a poster of a blonde in a gas mask, perched on a toilet with her red panties down around her ankles, and it reads, "*Dans la tempête du désert, la prudence s'impose partout*" ("In a desert storm, you have to be careful everywhere").

The intelligence business in late-twentieth-century Germany began as an owned-and-operated superpower Cold War business that, for all the obvious reasons, happened to be based here, and it didn't really inconvenience the Germans, since whatever was illegal within the borders of West Germany—wiretapping, for one thing, wasn't permitted in homes and private offices until the late nineties—the Allies were happy to supply. West Germany's job was to watch East Germany, and, once the two Germanys united, the Verfassungsschutz was left with a very limited mandate to "observe," but not to police or pursue, publicly identified terrorist groups, a job it did largely by doing what anyone who had a mind to could do: reading the German papers and infiltrating skinhead concerts and counting heads at meetings of right-wing parties on the edge of legality, like the N.P.D. Nobody thought much about reading Muslim papers or going to Muslim meetings, though Germany had nearly as big a Muslim population as France and more than twice Britain's. Three and a half million was the accepted count, and that didn't include illegal immigrants, or the thousands of people who arrived yearly from all over the Islamic world, applying for refugee status under what is certainly the world's most welcoming political-asylum policy. (More than twenty-five thousand Afghans have entered Germany in the five years since the Taliban seized power; about a thousand have entered France.)

More than three-quarters of Germany's Muslim residents were Turks, the children and grandchildren of Turkish Gastarbeiter who were recruited in the sixties and seventies to provide the unskilled labor for West Germany's "economic miracle," and stayed. They were not citizens by birth, had almost no hope of becoming citizens, and, in the main, kept out of the kinds of trouble that could get them sent "home" to villages few of them had ever seen. In fact, the Turks were regarded as a comically conservative population—good people, calm people, hardworking law-and-order people who were grateful to be in Germany. And they were certainly not extremists, unless you counted, say, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which ran protection rackets focussed mainly on other Turkish Kurds; or the "Caliph of Cologne," a self-styled Islamic nationalist and convicted criminal named Metin Kaplan, who declared a Muslim state in what most people think of as the Rhineland; or the large and publicly respectable Islamic Federation, which provided cover for a fanatical fundamentalist group called Milli Görüs, and is now supplying the teachers who, by a court decision in Berlin last year, are permitted to teach the Koran in the public schools of Germany's restored capital.

On September 11th, it was still illegal for the police to shut down the "religious charities" or mosque societies that were not doing anything dangerous in Germany but were publicly raising money for terrorist groups abroad—including, in the middle of Berlin, a Hamas charity with at least fifty members and a Hezbollah charity with more than a hundred and fifty. Germans have been understandably proud of their tolerance of foreigners (if not of the citizenship laws that effectively kept those foreigners "foreign"), and it was considered bad politics to suggest that Germany was buying the enviable safety within its borders by providing a safe haven for the kind of fanatics who don't think twice about the safety of other people, even, demonstrably, other Muslims. By now, the list of North African and Middle Eastern extremist groups in Germany is so long that when a friend at the B.N.D. ran through it for me I lost count somewhere around fourteen.

The fact is that Germany's best laws, like any democracy's best laws, protect its worst people, and one reason Germans do not have foreign terrorism in their cities is that the terrorists passing through on their student visas and business visas have not been willing to risk that protection by blowing up something here. There has been an illusion of safety in Germany—safety for sleepers, safety for policemen, safety for the politicians—and September shattered that illusion. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who is Schröder's chief of chancellery and, by all accounts, one of the most powerful people in his Cabinet, told me that in the past the B.N.D. had had no official assignment to investigate militant Islam, and maybe as a result no one had really known how militant Islam in Germany was. He said, dryly, "Perhaps it is a special feature of German 'transparency' that there is no real, open relation with our Muslim communities, especially in Berlin. The fact is that there is integration only to a small extent."

This was, if anything, an understatement. Most Berliners I know refer to Afghans as Arabs. In East Berlin, where twelve years ago the only immigrants in evidence were a couple of thousand North Vietnamese workers housed in freezing, dilapidated barracks, there is no integration at all, or, you could say, no immigrants. Even today, the state of Brandenburg, which surrounds Berlin, has more skinheads with police records than it has Muslim asylum seekers—six hundred skins, four hundred asylum seekers. And one of the reasons that Imams from the Islamic Federation won the right to teach the Koran in the city's public schools may be that so few accredited German-speaking teachers could. Robert von Rimscha, who runs the national political desk at the *Tagesspiegel*, thinks that the wall of silence between Germany's Christian and Muslim worlds dates from November 9, 1989, the day the real Wall fell, because that was when Germany stopped taking a lot of serious things seriously. Not just militant fundamentalism but things connected to militant fundamentalism, like the proliferation of nuclear or biological weapons in the Muslim world. "Germany felt peaceful and secure," he told me. "It was the end of history. We didn't feel the obligation to monitor. We didn't have embassy bombings. We didn't have the U.S.S. Cole. Why turn ourselves into a target?"

BREATH

Glassed in all day like this, I keep towelling the windows dry,
Trying to wipe the fog away that keeps me blind behind glass,
Unable to see the world outside for what it is, the way things
Become shadows and blunted silhouettes of themselves, birds
Only blurs where they shake a branch when they land or leave
Or just dash past, a flash of cloud particles snatching at crumbs
As I do myself each time I get the big window clear again and try
To take in all the colors and shapes out there, all the living bits
Of matter that stand in their own ordinary uncanny light,
Until blearing begins again and I see my own breathing does it.

—*Eamon Grennan*

Transparency does not necessarily make citizens smarter or politicians more sensitive. People at the B.N.D. complain that for years there was no interest at home in the kind of intelligence they were gathering about the connections between criminal networks and terrorist networks, or, more precisely, between the practical clandestine life of one terrorist and the traffic in weapons, technology, drugs, illegal immigrants, laundered money, and protection on which his life depends. It has been four years now since a Paris magistrate named Jean-Louis Brugière ended an eight-year trek through the muck of his own country's diplomatic courtesies and the French learned that one Samsonite suitcase containing one bomb, smuggled onto a plane carrying nearly two hundred passengers, could easily involve the handiwork of terror specialists in half a dozen countries. But four years have not done much to persuade anyone's secret services to pool their information. On the eve of the euro, with hundreds of Al Qaeda suspects in Western Europe and almost no solid evidence on which to arrest most of them, Germany's spies were grumbling less about the data-protection laws than about protecting the data *they* had—from everybody else's spies, from their own police. And the truth is that some cops here were so unequipped for the job at hand that it passed for normal when, as the *Wall Street Journal* reported, a B.K.A. policeman, staking out the Hamburg apartment of a Syrian "import-export" man assumed to have been bin Laden's local banker, had to ask a reporter waiting on the street if he knew how to get hold of the Syrian's cell-phone number. (He was, in fact, startled to learn that the reporter already had it.)

The B.N.D. was especially worried about leaks. One agent told me, "Some of our best sources were compromised the minute they became 'visible' to the police." This, of course, left a pool of informers exposed, and confirmed the agent's opinion that the criminal police were a leaky outfit, that they didn't have the discipline of good spies and couldn't be trusted with the kind of intelligence that might be traced to an operative working deep cover in the Middle East. On the other hand, he allowed that not many sleepers were likely to be caught in Germany until the police and the secret services got more access to each other's data, and the legal means to compare it. The problem, he said, wasn't so much the legacy of 8 Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse. (The B.K.A. has no authority to gather intelligence or run undercover cops or mount a sting, or even to initiate an investigation, without a court order, but no one I talked to suggested giving the police more power, including most of the policemen.) As he saw it, the problem was the reluctance of cops and spies to test what access they already had by picking up the phone and asking for something. He told me, by way of an explanation, about the courts rejecting a B.K.A. request to investigate one suspected terrorist on the ground that its evidence had been obtained illegally, through a source in the B.N.D. This had happened a year ago, but he hadn't forgotten. The real legacy may be that, by now, no one in Germany is as anxious about breaking laws as the men and women who are supposed to enforce them.

Spies obviously have much broader powers than policemen; they have the special license that comes with clandestinity—which is to say, with not being accountable. But Germany's spies have been hamstrung since the Wall fell, not so much by transparency as by neglect. Their budget was cut, and then, with Schröder's election, in 1998, they lost their recruiting office and found themselves left with a lot of fancy technology but no real money to hire and train agents in the languages and complicated cultures of the Middle East. The result was that Germany came to depend on its allies for field intelligence—on Britain and America and, most of all, Israel, which arguably fields more agents and informers in the Muslim world than any other country and has the advantage, in the Mossad, of a dependably "leakproof" secret service. There were, of course, thousands of East German spies available after 1989—more than ninety thousand unemployed Stasi, not to mention the three hundred thousand informers responsible for filling some eighty-eight million pages of microfilmed reports. But East Germans were never really an option. The decision was made early on to avoid what one agent described to me as "the secret-service mind-set of the East," by which he meant that you couldn't be sure whose interests a spy from the East, dropped into a Muslim country, would be pursuing, and you certainly couldn't be sure that he'd pursue them with anything like reliability or discretion or enthusiasm for Germany's foreign policy, especially when it had to do with supporting America. Even Frank-Walter Steinmeier, at the Chancellery, mentioned that the "remnants of resentment" in Germany's eastern states were strong. He said that if I looked to East Germany for the kind of coöperation that came from "gratitude to the United States, the perception of responsibility toward the United States," I was going to be disappointed.

When we talked, the old East German Communist Party—the Party of Democratic Socialism now—had just won nearly fifty per cent of the votes in the east of Berlin in the local elections, making the Communists the third-largest party in Germany's new capital and, as it turns out, a partner in the coalition that could easily be in power for the next five years. No one had expected this to happen. Berliners in the west had taken it on faith that the Party was dying. But, once it did happen, everyone knew why: it wasn't the unemployment in East Berlin, or the hard times, or even the endemic corruption of the Christian Democrats who had run Berlin before; it was Gerhard Schröder, who had promised George W. Bush his "unconditional support."

Hansjörg Geiger, the West German jurist who oversaw the opening of the Stasi archives and went on to head the Verfassungsschutz and the B.N.D., is now the state secretary running the Justice Ministry and, since September 11th, has been its liaison to Schröder's anti-terrorism task force. He thinks that the "problem of political culture" was also a West German prob-

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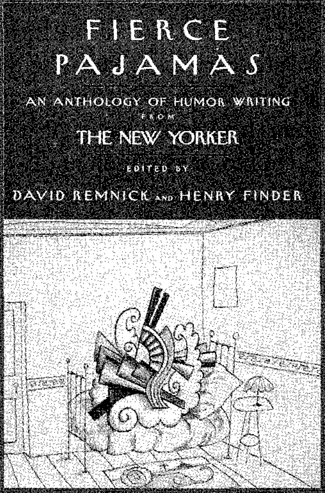

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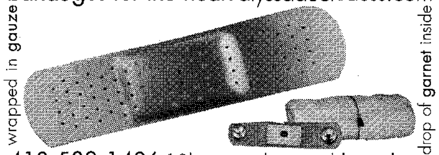

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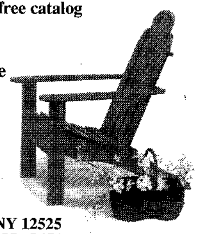

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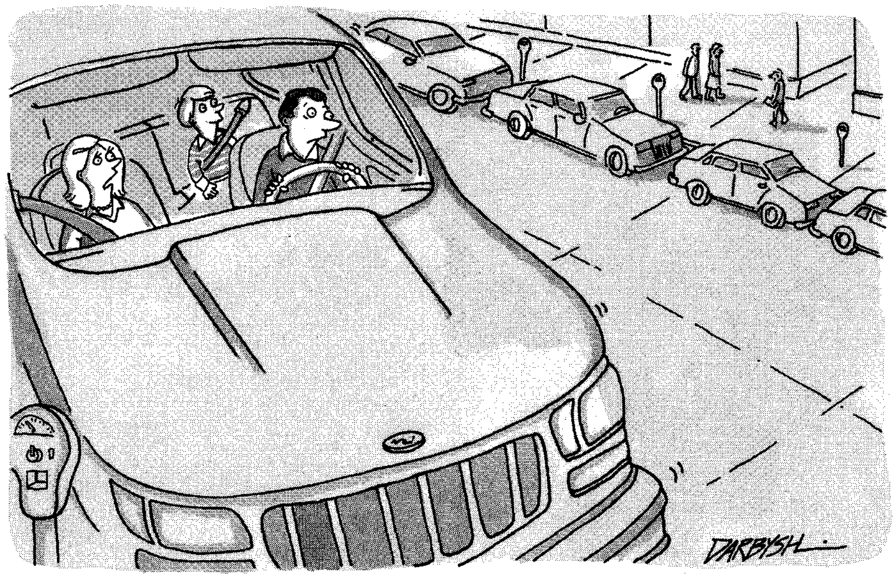
lem, given the awkwardness, for Germany's leaders, of having had to respond to terrorism alerts coming in from agents in countries with which German industry was doing a vigorous business in products most kindly described as "dual-use chemicals." It's been reported that eighty, or even ninety, per cent of the technology and the ingredients for Iraq's chemical-weapons industry came from West Germany and that, even after the Gulf War, sales continued to the Middle East. People at the B.N.D. told me that, if September 11th has had any lasting effect in Germany, it was to persuade a political class still celebrating the demise of the old enemy that it had new enemies, some of whom it had helped maintain, and that it might even be dangerous—dangerous to Germans—to keep welcoming those enemies into Germany's tolerant cities with the same indifferent hypocrisy it had shown when they ordered Germany's pesticides and fertilizers.

In a country still so nervous about displays of power that it is considered unseemly even to talk about turning Berlin's Philharmonic into a national orchestra, it isn't surprising that most of the people charged with identifying, investigating, arresting, and prosecuting terrorists don't usually get anywhere near the capital, or even anywhere near one another. Germany has as many spies and cops as the next country. Eight thousand people are attached to the Verfassungsschutz and the B.N.D., five thousand to the B.K.A. But the old Allied imperative of 1949—power in Germany must never again be centralized—still holds. The Verfassungsschutz is headquartered in Cologne; the B.N.D. in Pullach, about half an hour from Munich; the Federal Prosecutor in Karlsruhe; the B.K.A. in Wiesbaden; and the state security offices of the B.K.A. in a town called Meckenheim, in North Rhine-Westphalia, which most Germans have yet to locate on a map.

Some of the men and women who run those agencies claim never to have met before the attacks last year. After September 11th, they were meeting daily, along with the chief of military intelligence; Schily's state secretary and his counterpart, Hansjörg Geiger; Frank-Walter Steinmeier (who as chief of chancellery oversees the B.N.D.); and a former head of the Hamburg Verfassungsschutz named Ernst Uhrlau, who is Schröder's federal-security coördinator. Now they are down to once a week at the Chancellery, and the logistics of these meetings have, you could say, "centralized" intelligence in Gerhard Schröder's office, an irony not lost on the various chiefs of service who make the trip and often complain that in a "normal" country, with federal agencies situated in the capital, they would be having lunch or sharing a late-night drink and even sharing some of the useful information that is not likely to get passed along in a phone call or an interoffice E-mail. They say they might all profit from a little informal coöperation, if for no other reason than that so much of what a spy or a policeman does is not necessarily convenient for a German Chancellor to hear.



"You just parked on a Saturn."

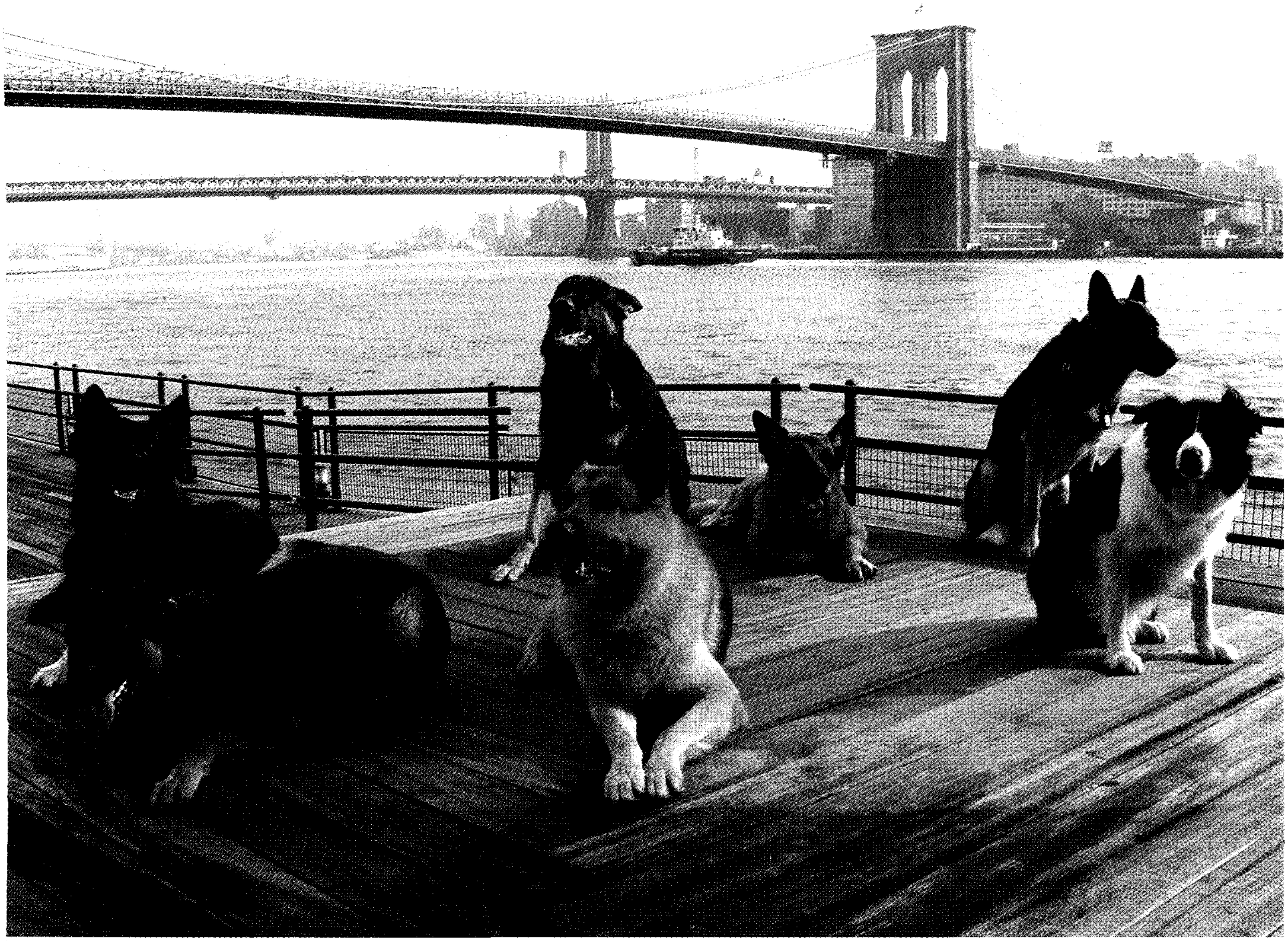
It all depends on what you mean by transparency. Steinmeier, who seems like a man of steely platitudes until you type your notes and realize how much he's said, saw me after one of those weekly meetings. According to his press secretary (a young Protestant theologian with whom I had an agreeable argument on the nature of evil), our interview was part of an effort to make Germany's support for America transparent, though Steinmeier himself allowed that America was not really very transparent to him. He had recently had a meeting with Daniel Coats, the new, and ardently Christian, United States Ambassador, and came away feeling that, while the Ambassador was very nice, it was remarkable that "we are of such a different mentality." At the time, it was rumored that the one real sticking point between the police and the intelligence services of the two countries was banking. Germany can freeze assets—it has frozen more than two hundred accounts since September—but the law makes it nearly impossible to document, let alone trace, the kinds of banking transactions that might open a paper trail through the terror network. In fact, there is no central data base in which the names and numbers of private or corporate accounts in Germany are registered, though this has less to do with the data-protection laws than with the reluctance of Germany's big businessmen (and political patrons) to apply a little transparency to their own banking practices, or to have their assets traced to Switzerland, next door.

The F.B.I. agents who arrived in September are still digging, and they are reportedly still complaining more about banking secrecy than about any of the other obstacles to what is publicly described as a dandy relationship with their German counterparts—who are now convinced that, because of this, the F.B.I. is keeping information from them. "The Germans are getting little intelligence from the Americans for one reason—because they are giving little" is how a reporter I know put it. But, in

WE ♥ DOGS

WESTMINSTER KENNEL CLUB, PEDIGREE, and USA NETWORK salute

The Loyal Search and Rescue Dogs of September 11th



Photographed by Chris Ameuroso

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IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS FOLLOWING September 11th, the nation embraced the city of New York and the tireless efforts of those working at Ground Zero. Among them were the extraordinary Search and Rescue dogs of New York and New Jersey. These dogs and their handlers continue to exemplify the determined drive and courage we have come to associate with the people of New York City.

Around the world, the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show has always stood for excellence, but this year the competition will stand for something more. On opening night, the Westminster Kennel Club, Pedigree and USA Network will proudly pay tribute to the Search and Rescue dogs from Ground Zero. This special tribute will be telecast live from Madison Square Garden on February 11th, 2002.

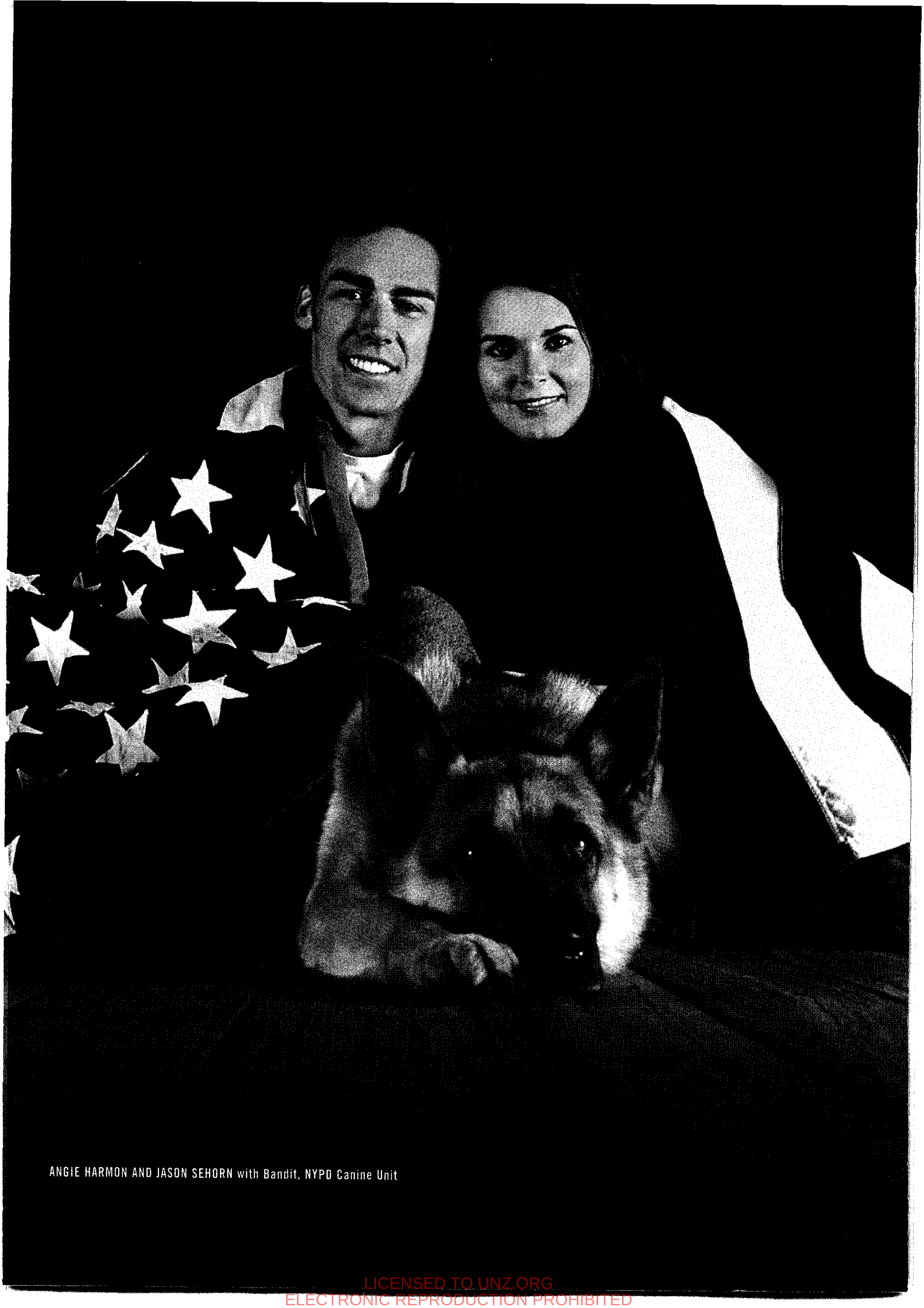
In the spirit of Westminster, many local celebrities volunteered to meet the brave dogs who served New York, and the nation, in our time of crisis. We hope this pictorial conveys the strong sense of gratitude we feel for these canine heroes. In short...

WE♥DOGS

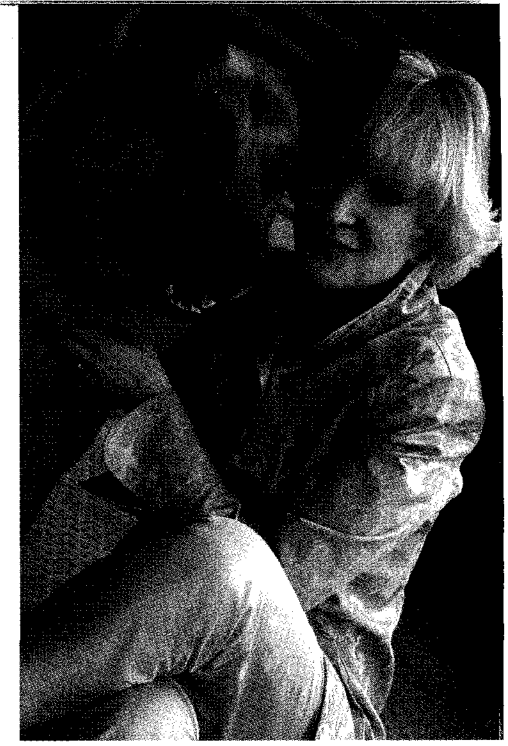
NYPD Canine Unit and their Search and Rescue dogs.

JAMES AND MARCY GANDOLFINI with Atlas and Apollo, NYPD Canine Unit

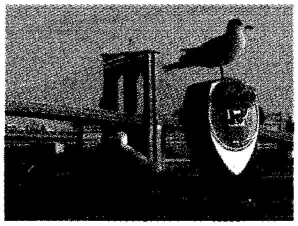
JANEANE GAROFALO and Storm, NYPD Canine Unit.



ANGIE HARMON AND JASON SEHORN with Bandit, NYPD Canine Unit



CHRISTINE EBERSOLE with Argus, New Jersey Task Force 1



IN HONOR OF SEARCH AND RESCUE DOGS everywhere, Westminster Kennel Club, Pedigree and USA Network will make a collective donation to the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR). NASAR is a self-supporting, not-for-profit educational association furthering the advancement of scientific knowledge and training in all aspects of search and rescue. NASAR's primary goal is to aid in the implementation of fully-integrated emergency response, rescue and recovery systems. Once operational, these vital systems save precious lives.

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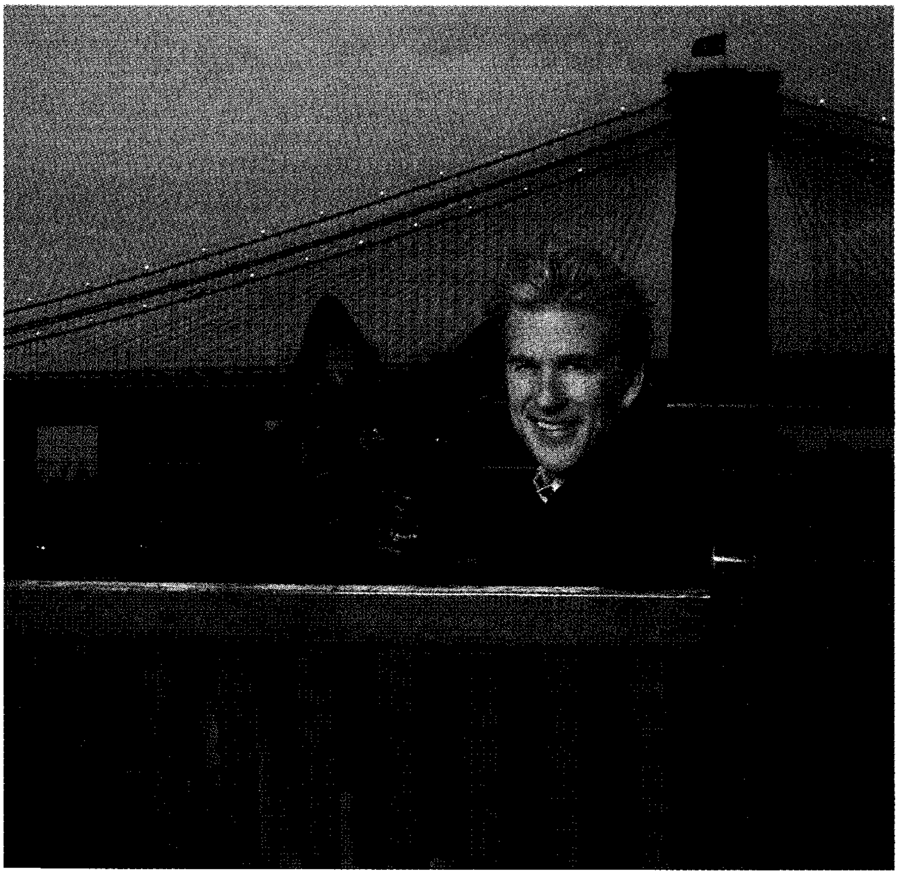
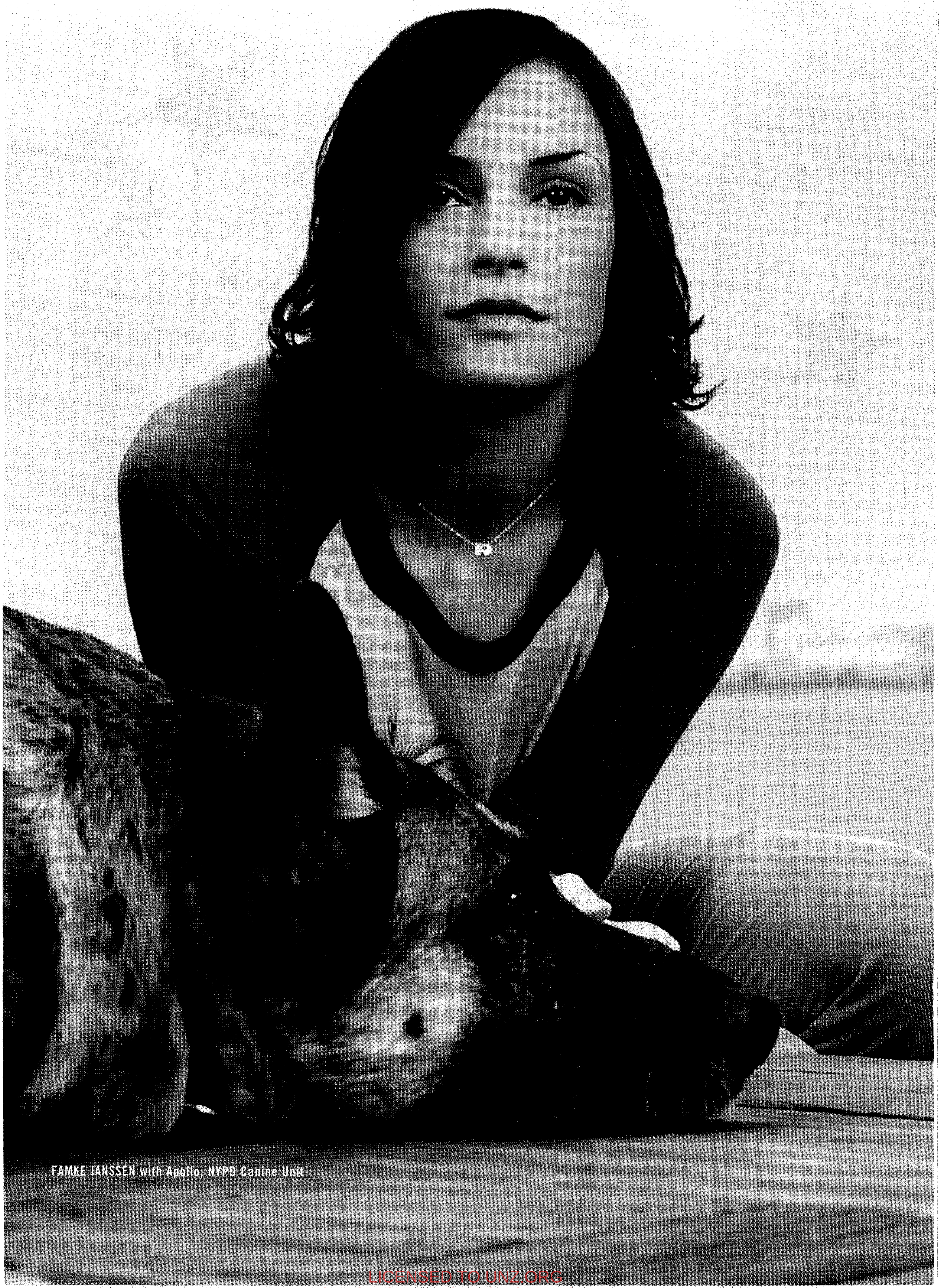
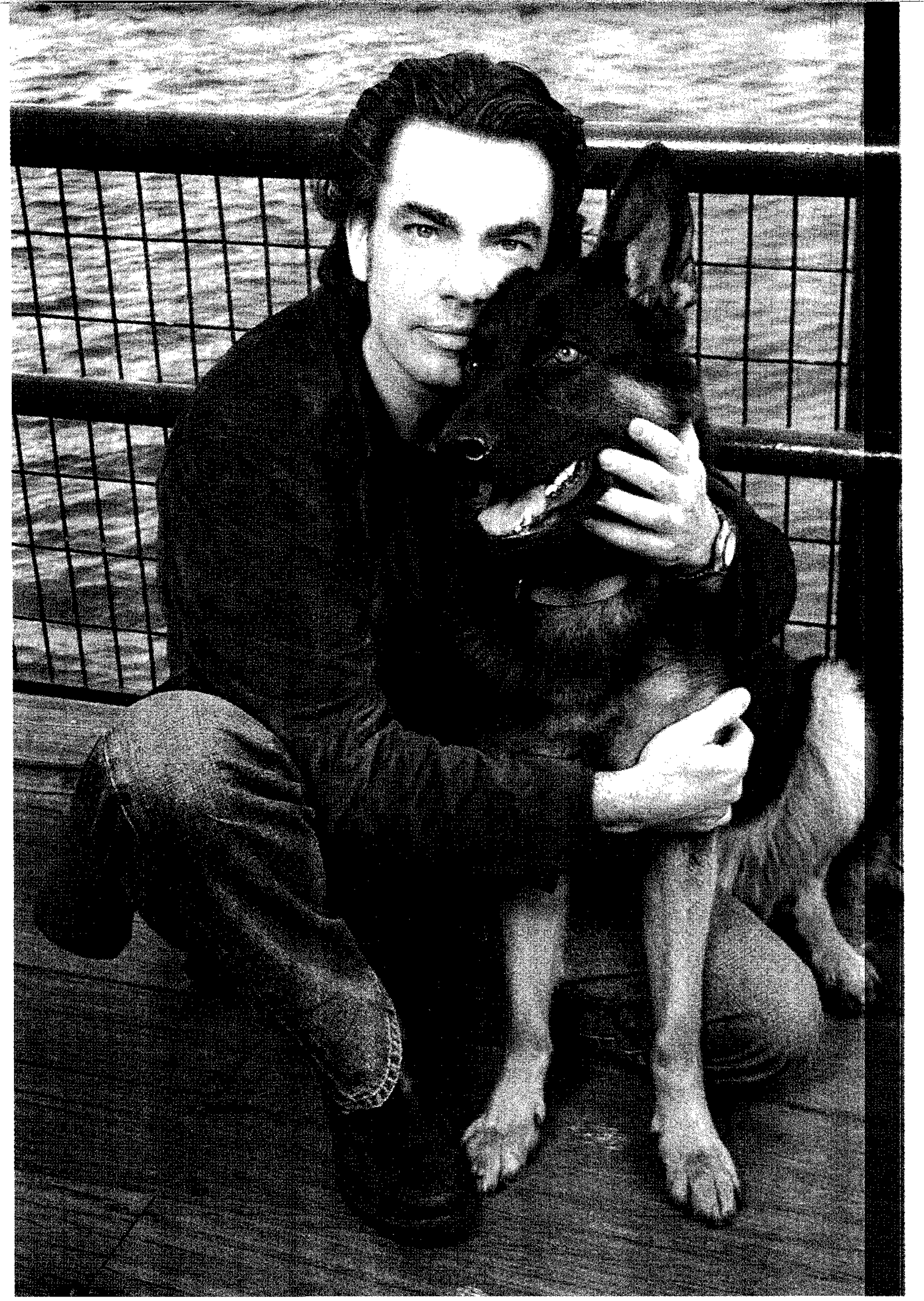


MATTHEW MODINE with Piper, New Jersey Task Force 1



FAMKE JANSSEN with Apollo, NYPD Canine Unit



PETER GALLAGHER with Anna, New Jersey Task Force 1

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SPECIAL THANKS NYPD Officers - Lieutenant Donadio, Jim Bastan, John Ryan, Paul Gitlin, Pete Davis, Bobby Rolando, Robert Schnelle, Walter Byrtchell, David Sanabria, Paul Harnett, NJTF1 Officers - Raymond Lynch, Lorrie Clemmo, Sonny Whynman, Sarah Atlas, Pascal Gailand, and of course, the dogs: Anna - New Jersey Task Force 1, Apollo - NYPD Canine Unit, Argus - New Jersey Task Force 1, Atlas - NYPD Canine Unit, Blitz - New Jersey Task Force 1, Chase - NYPD Canine Unit, Piper - New Jersey Task Force 1, Storm - NYPD Canine Unit, Bandit - NYPD Canine Unit

Photographed on location at South Street Seaport

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WHO WILL WIN BEST IN SHOW?

WE ♥ DOGS

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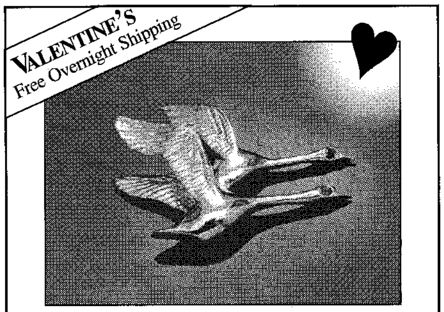
fact, the German banking system is so archaic that no one besides the bankers has that intelligence to give. Banking was only minimally covered in Schily's anti-terrorism packages, and foreign police are astounded to learn that a German policeman or intelligence agent trying to trace money or identify a suspect's accounts still has to submit a request to every one of the country's three thousand banks—a procedure that is unlikely to inspire much efficiency, let alone much interest, in your average investigator. A lawyer who covers money-laundering issues for the Association of German Banks told me that, with four hundred million bank accounts in the country, there was simply no available technology for constructing a central computerized data base, but his argument—which is the argument of most German bankers—seems a little ingenuous in a world where computers are tracking the universe and describing the human genome.

On the other hand, the police point out that the kind of banking that terrorists are likely to do is more in the spirit of "underground banking," or, as it's sometimes called, "corner-store banking": the guy with the corner store in Jidda or Oran gets the money from someone there and then calls his cousin with the corner store in Hamburg or Frankfurt, who advances the money to the terrorist and eventually gets it back, in one way or another, from the guy at home. It's a system based on family and clan and mosque connections, and it proves, if nothing else, that the cell phone and the Internet café will take a terrorist only so far in the global village—because the real global village is the village that, in the end, will hold you, or your cousin, accountable if your debt's not paid.

And it's certainly not a system that lends itself to the kind of computer profiling known to Germans as *Rasterfahndung*, which was resurrected last fall, some twenty-five years after it was used in a not very effective attempt to profile left-wing German terrorists, was contested by German liberals, and inspired the data-protection legislation that effectively banned it. Schily, who at the time was a furious critic of data profiling, says he has since decided that "if there's a dead man on the sidewalk, and witnesses say that the murderer was very tall, with blue eyes, dark hair, and a big nose, you expect the police to look for a person with blue eyes, dark hair, and a big nose," and you don't think Germans are demonizing tall, dark, blue-eyed people with big noses. But a lot of Germans do think it. The *Raster* profile of a likely Al Qaeda sleeper is a Muslim male between eighteen and forty. He carries a passport from one of the Arab states, enters the country on a student visa, enrolls in a college, probably a technical college, and does well, though not well enough to risk being singled out. At one time or another, he finds a job at an airport or a utility company—someplace "useful." He crosses on green and pays his bills in cash and his taxes on time—even his yearly radio and television tax, which no self-respecting German student would ever think of paying—and he always pitches in when the neighbors hold a block party or need someone to knock on doors collecting money, the way they are doing now for the families of Germans who died in New York in September.

Peter-Michael Haeberer, who runs the Berlin police, has been testing that profile against a narrowing list of suspects. I was told that he'd started with two hundred and ninety possible Berlin sleepers, but he was certainly almost through it when the city—under pressure because of a complaint filed by three Muslim students—called a halt to *Raster* profiling late last month. He has also been trying to get some sense of what, to his mind, are the city's most likely targets. He suspects that they aren't its buildings. "There's nothing as dramatic or symbolic as the World Trade Center in Berlin" is Haeberer's view. In fact, he has come to believe that the likeliest targets are places like the waterworks, which filter water to the city center through a complicated system of open canals, or the electricity board, which turns out to be the only source of power for the entire eastern half of the city, or any other utility that might interest a young man with a working knowledge of airports or waterworks or electricity boards, and the freedom that comes from living in a country that, on September 11th, was still coming to terms with the topography of its own terror. ♦



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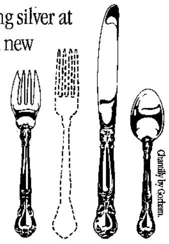
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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE REAL HEROES ARE DEAD

A love story.

BY JAMES B. STEWART

As Susan Greer was walking her golden retriever one morning near her home, in Morristown, New Jersey, she heard footsteps behind her. It was just after six, on a warm Saturday in late July of 1998; she liked the quiet and the early-morning light. The footsteps came closer, and then a jogger passed her. He was tall and somewhat heavy, and appeared to be about her age—she was fifty-six. What really caught her attention was his feet. He had no shoes on. It wasn't like her to say anything to a stranger, but curiosity overcame her, and she asked, "What are you doing jogging in your bare feet?"

The jogger didn't stop, or even turn around. "I need to know what it feels like to run without shoes," he shouted, and explained that he was writing a play, and it was set in Africa. Then he was out of earshot. Even though Susan hadn't glimpsed his face, something about his voice made an impression. She felt sure the same could not be said about her. She hadn't bothered with any makeup that morning and was wearing old shorts and a T-shirt.

The next morning, she and the dog, Buddy, were again on their walk when a dark-green Lincoln Mark VIII pulled up, and a man inside said hello. She recognized the voice from the previous day. "Why not come to breakfast?" he asked.

Susan saw that the man had an open, friendly face and a direct gaze. "I can't—I have the dog," she said.

He seemed genuinely disappointed, so Susan proposed an alternative.

"Why don't you come have coffee on the patio," she said. She gave him the address of her town house, just around the corner.

Within the hour, she was pouring him coffee. He said that his name was Rick Rescorla, and he seemed eager to talk—so eager that Susan doubted he was paying much attention to her end of the conversation. (She was later surprised to learn that he remembered everything she'd said.) Rescorla told her that he was divorced, with two children, and was living in the area to be near them. He had been married for many years, but he and his wife had grown apart, and when he felt his children were old enough they'd divorced. His name wasn't really Rick, he explained, but hardly anyone called him by his given names, Cyril Richard. He had grown up in Hayle, a tiny village in Cornwall, on England's southwest coast, with his grandparents and his mother, who worked as a housekeeper and companion to the elderly. He'd left Hayle in 1956, when he was sixteen, to join the British military. He'd fought against Communist-backed insurgencies in Cyprus from 1957 to 1960, and in Rhodesia from 1960 to 1963.

These experiences had made him a fierce anti-Communist. The reason he had come to America, he said, was to enlist in the Army, so that he could go to Vietnam. He welcomed the opportunity to join the American cause in Southeast Asia and, for a long time, had never questioned the wisdom or morality of the war. After fighting in Vietnam, he returned to the United States, using his military benefits to study creative writing at the University of Oklahoma, and eventually earning a bachelor's, a master's in literature, and a law degree. He had met his former wife there.

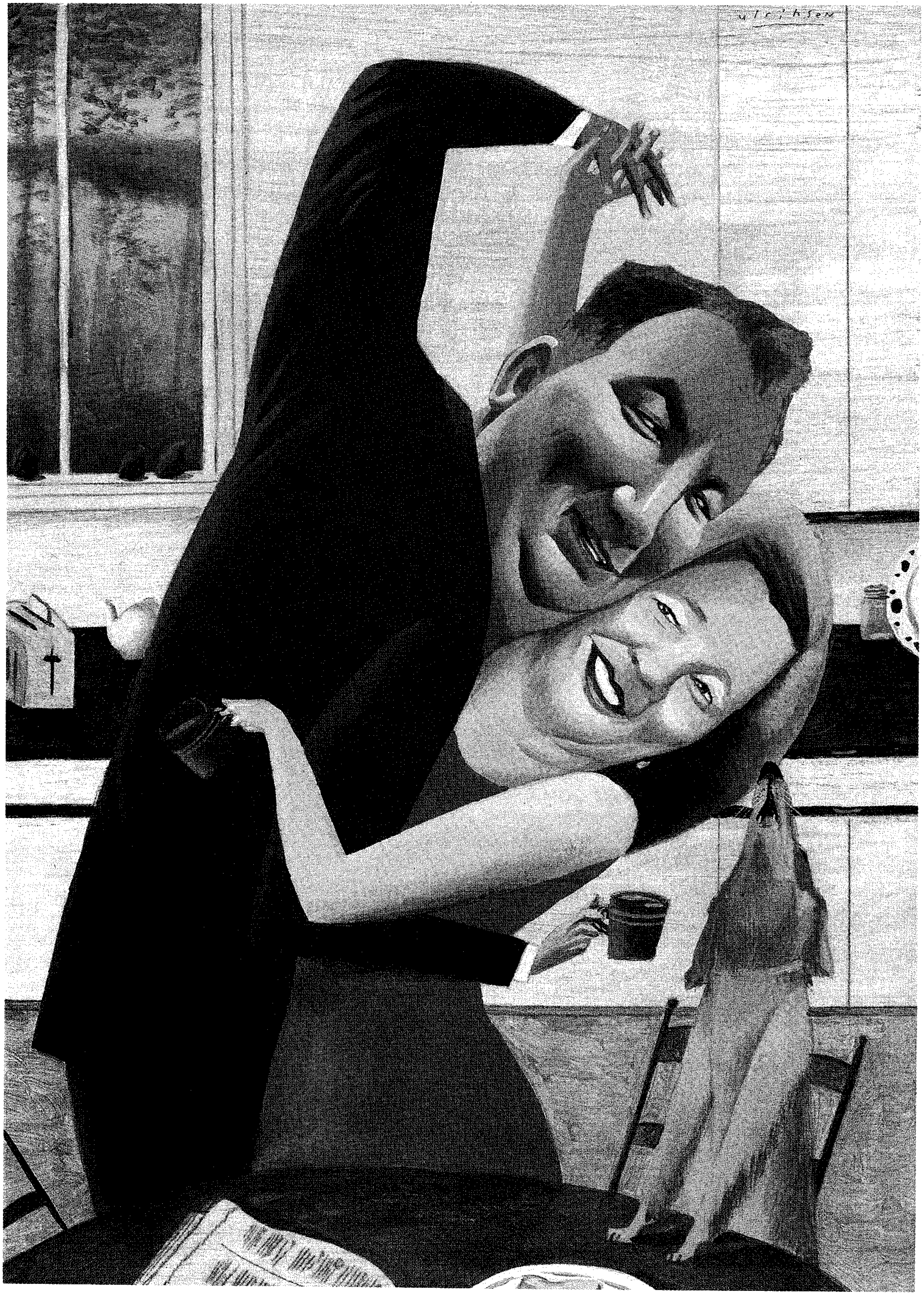
Now he was spending his free time trying to write, mainly plays and screenplays. The play he had mentioned the previous morning, "M'kubwa Junction," was set in Rhodesia, he said, and was based on his time there. Few of the native Rhodesians had worn shoes, which was why he had to feel what it was like to run barefoot. And all his life, he said, he had worked out and kept himself in good shape. He seemed self-conscious about his weight, and explained that his body had swollen because of medical treatments. He had prostate cancer, and the cancer had spread to his bone marrow. He said that he didn't know how much time he had to live, but, whatever was left, he intended to make the most of it.

As Rescorla was rising to leave, he turned to Susan and said, "I know we are going to be friends forever." After saying goodbye, she cleared the cups and led Buddy into the house. When she glanced at the kitchen clock, she was surprised to see that it was eleven-thirty; four and a half hours had passed.

Susan made a point of reminding herself that a woman in her fifties with three grown daughters and two failed marriages behind her should have few illusions about romantic prospects. After nursing her mother through a long struggle with Alzheimer's disease, she had resigned herself to merely going out to dinner occasionally with women friends in similar circumstances. In her mother's final years, Susan's town house had been transformed into a virtual nursing home. She also worked full time, as assistant to a dean at Fairleigh Dickinson University, in Madison, New Jersey, and had managed to get her three daughters through college. She had had practically no free time. Still, she had once asked her mother, "Will anyone ever love me again?"

Like many women her age, Susan had been brought up to be a wife and mother, and had never aspired to anything else. An only child, she lived with her parents and grandparents in Glen Ridge in an elegant Colonial house that had once served as George Washington's headquarters. Her father, a physician, came home after his hospital rounds every day for a formal lunch. The family summered on the Chesapeake Bay,

MARK ULRIKSEN



Susan Greer didn't care what her friends thought—she wasn't going to miss this opportunity. She saw Rick Rescorla every day.

and when she was seventeen her parents took her on a two-month tour of Europe. After graduating from Endicott College, in Massachusetts—at that time a two-year women's college that was essentially a finishing school—she studied art history in Madrid. She thought of getting a job in Manhattan, but instead married a high-school boyfriend from a similarly affluent family, embarked on a honeymoon tour of Europe that lasted from June to September, and looked forward to leading a conventional upper-middle-class life. Soon she was pregnant with her first child.

Over the next seventeen years, Susan took care of her daughters, decorated and maintained a large house, and travelled abroad frequently with her husband and children. Then, when her youngest daughter was four, her husband announced that he was leaving her. Because of his financial problems, the house had to be sold at a sheriff's auction to pay off debts. Susan had no marketable skills. She went to the travel agency that had once arranged her visits to luxury resorts and European capitals and offered to work without pay to learn the business.

Her second marriage, to a forensic pathologist, who initially showered her with attention and promised to care for her and her children, also ended badly. She didn't have much confidence in herself, and was wary of another involvement.

Nevertheless, when she took Buddy for his walk the next day she kept an eye out for the unusual man she'd invited for coffee. There was no sign of Rick Rescorla or his car. She realized that she didn't know where he worked, or even if he had a regular job, or whether he wrote plays full time. Three days later, driving home from work—she was now an administrative assistant at a nearby bank—she saw his car coming from the other direction. He noticed her, too, and rolled down his window. "Where were you?" he shouted. He told her that he regularly caught the six-ten train to Manhattan, and he had looked for her each morning on the way to the station. "I'd like to take you out," he said. "Wherever you'd like." He scribbled his phone number on a piece of paper and asked her to call.

Rescorla picked Susan up the following Sunday morning, and they drove to Frenchtown, on the Delaware River, and had brunch at an inn. Afterward, Rescorla pulled out a cigar, and she had one, too. He told her that his family had been poor, but every Saturday his grandmother gave him money for the movies. He was dazzled by the images of America, and especially by Westerns and Hollywood musicals; he'd longed to go on the stage himself. He had a good singing voice, he said, and he'd always wanted to take dancing lessons. Would Susan take lessons with him? They walked across the bridge over the Delaware. Halfway across, they paused to look down into the water, and Rescorla said, "This is the beginning."

The next week, they enrolled at the Arthur Murray studio in Chatham. Both Rick and Susan turned out to be good dancers, and after class they would go to his house or hers and continue practicing as soon as they walked in the door. They excelled at Latin rhythms—the tango, the rumba, the samba. Rick bought Susan extra-high heels to give her more height on the dance floor. He also began helping her choose her clothes. She didn't mind; he tended to steer her away from the dressier fashions and elaborate jewelry she had favored and toward more relaxed styles. Wherever there was music—a store, a restaurant, a waiting room—he would grab her waist and give her a spin, and they'd launch into one of their routines.

Rescorla wasn't just a writer, Susan learned. He had a job on Wall Street, as a vice-president in charge of security at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter. She found that when she was with him she couldn't stop smiling. Her friends at work were happy for her, and kidded her about being in love, but some warned her that she was rushing into a relationship with a man she barely knew. Susan didn't care what her friends thought. She saw Rick every day. They were so eager for time together that they neglected their families and friends. Susan felt that they had been destined to find each other late in life, after each had endured a long, sometimes arduous journey. Rick had survived war and cancer; she had suffered through two debilitating marriages. They felt that they were "soul mates"—not because they had so much in common but because their differences were so complementary. She was interested in cultural activities, and introduced him to art galleries, museums, and antique shops. He loved nature and history; he took her to parks and historic sites. She was Episcopalian; he had embraced Zen Buddhism, and urged her to simplify her life, as he had. At his suggestion, she took up meditation.

In October, they decided to live together. In a development in Morristown, they found a town house with large glass doors and windows opening out onto a tranquil pond. The pond was edged with meadow grasses and attracted waterfowl and migrating birds. They sold their own houses and moved into the new one. Susan got rid of her collection of antiques, her china, her crystal. Rick, too, wanted to start fresh. One day, as they were unpacking, Susan found a framed shadow box filled with medals and military decorations—among them the Silver Star, the Bronze Star with oak-leaf cluster, a Purple Heart, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. She hung the display on the wall of the den, but when Rick saw it he told her to put it away. "I don't want any of this stuff out," he said, uncharacteristically terse.

She also came across photographs of Rick in uniform at age twenty-five, with Army buddies, and with Vietnamese officials. He looked thin and wiry, with a buzz haircut and a big smile. Rick threw out some of the photographs and put others in a closet. Sometimes veterans who had served with him would telephone. Susan didn't know what they talked about, but Rick always had trouble sleeping afterward. He had his phone number and E-mail address changed to make it more difficult for them to reach him. He told Susan that he didn't want to live in the past, that he was looking for peace. He and Susan would often sit in their living room, meditating or gazing at the landscape.

Rick had never mentioned marriage, but one afternoon, at a craft fair, where they were admiring some rings, he said, "Why don't you pick one out?" They ended up haunting jewelry stores. Eventually, Rick spotted a ring in a store in Millburn. "That's the one," he said. After Susan had it on her finger, she said, "You never asked me to marry you!"

He seemed surprised. "Will you?" he asked.

Rescorla wanted to be married somewhere near the sea, to remind him of his childhood home, in Cornwall, and he suggested St. Augustine, Florida. The person he wanted to be his best man lived there, he said. His name was Dan Hill.

Hill and Rescorla told people that they'd met at Fort Dix, in New Jersey, in 1963, when they arrived for basic training. In reality, Hill and Rescorla had met in Northern Rhodesia two years before. Hill was originally from Chicago, and had been in Rhodesia as a mercenary, fighting a Communist-backed insurgency there. The two men, who met at a rugby match, had felt an instant rapport. Rescorla introduced Hill to the works of Rudyard Kipling, especially "The Man Who Would Be King." Kipling's accounts of British heroism struck a chord. Rescorla had worked for British military intelligence and fought in Cyprus; Hill had been active in various capacities in Hungary in 1956 and in Lebanon in 1958, and in training exercises for the Bay of Pigs operation, in 1961.

After the Rhodesian conflict ended, with the British withdrawal from Northern Rhodesia, Hill persuaded Rescorla to join him in the United States Army. He argued that the next major fight against Communism was shaping up in Vietnam.

Both Hill and Rescorla were fanatics about fitness and about survival skills. Rescorla may have told Susan that he was running barefoot as research for a play, but he had already been running barefoot in Africa, and then at Fort Dix, toughening his soles to the point where he could extinguish a fire with his bare feet. He told Hill that if he lost his boots in combat it wouldn't matter. This was something he'd absorbed from his years in Africa. "You should be able to strip a man naked and throw him out with nothing on him," he told Hill. By the end of the day, the man should be clothed and fed. By the end of the week, he should own a horse. And by the end of a year he should own a business and have money in the bank.

At Fort Dix, the two were immediately promoted to acting sergeant. They spent weekends together, with Hill's wife and two children. In their free time, they went on picnics and visited Revolutionary War battlefields. Hill considered himself something of a military historian, but he was no match for Rescorla, who, although he hadn't been to college, had read all fifty-one volumes of the Harvard Classics. He had memorized long stretches of Shakespeare and often quoted Churchill. When Rescorla became an American citizen, in 1967, Hill was at his side.

Both men were chosen for Officer Candidate School, and when they graduated, in 1965, Hill was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, Rescorla to the Seventh Air Cavalry. Units of the two divisions were among the first ordered to Southeast Asia. Rescorla arrived in September; Hill followed in December. Rather than spend his first week of R. and R. in Hong Kong or Honolulu with the rest of his brigade, Hill opted to go straight to the Vietcong-controlled Central Highlands to fight with Rescorla, who was leading a mobile combat platoon.

The remote Ia Drang Valley, less than ten miles from the Cambodian border, was a Communist stronghold and a supply route for North Vietnamese forces in the south. In November of 1965, the American military command ordered Rescorla's unit, Bravo company of the Seventh Air Cavalry's 2nd Battalion, to the center of a hostile area to support a battalion surrounded by three regiments of hardened enemy troops—more than two thousand soldiers. Rescorla directed his men to dig foxholes and establish a defense perimeter. Exploring the hilly terrain beyond the perimeter, he came under enemy fire. After nightfall, he and his men endured waves of assault. To keep morale up, Rescorla led the men in military

Dan Hill (left) persuaded Rescorla to join the United States Army and go to Vietnam.

"There's a gentleman here who says he would like to look at our books."

• •

cheers and Cornish songs throughout the night.

The next morning, Rescorla took a patrol through the battlefield, searching for American dead and wounded. As he looked over a giant anthill, he encountered an enemy machine-gun nest. The startled North Vietnamese fired on him, and Rescorla hurled a grenade into the nest. There were no survivors.

Rescorla and Bravo company were evacuated by helicopter. The rest of the battalion marched to a nearby landing zone. On the way, they were ambushed, and Bravo company was again called in for relief. Only two helicopters made it through enemy fire. As the one carrying Rescorla descended, the pilot was wounded, and he started to lift up. Rescorla and his men jumped the remaining ten feet, bullets flying at them, and made it into the beleaguered camp. As Lieutenant Larry Gwin later recalled the scene, "I saw Rick Rescorla come swaggering into our lines with a smile on his face, an M-79 on his shoulder, his M-16 in one hand, saying, 'Good, good, good! I hope they hit us with everything they got tonight—we'll wipe them up.' His spirit was catching. The enemy must have thought an entire battalion was coming to help us, because of all our screaming and yelling."

Though Hill and Rescorla were nominally in separate units, at times they operated together. They made a formidable team. Hill had such a keen sense of the presence of enemy soldiers that Rescorla told him he was "better than an English pointer," Hill recalled. "If we got into trouble and hit something, he was the commander. He'd leave me at the base of the fire, and he'd maneuver into the enemy. We didn't even have to speak. We thought so much alike, he'd just nod or wink and I knew what he was going to do." To memorialize their close friendship, Rescorla bought matching Bowie knives with their names engraved on the blades, and Hill gave Rescorla a 9-mm Browning automatic pistol adorned with their division patches and initials.

Hill and Rescorla survived Vietnam, but many of their comrades did not. Three hundred and five died in the Ia Drang Valley alone, one of the heaviest losses ever sustained by a single American regiment. Many times, Rescorla cradled the bodies of his dying soldiers, speaking softly and reassuringly to them. "You're going to be all right," he promised, no matter how dire the situation. After a soldier died, Rescorla would cover his hands with the soldier's blood, in a sort of ritual. "He was terribly compassionate, unlike me," Hill recalled. "Rick died a little bit with every guy who died under his command."

The two friends returned to the United States after their tour of duty in Vietnam, and they roomed next door to each other at Fort Benning, Georgia. Rescorla left the military in 1968 for the University of Oklahoma. Inside the toughened military veteran, he insisted, was the soul of a writer. He had already started writing a novel, which he often discussed with Hill. He called it "Pegasus," and it was about a mobile-air-cavalry unit coming together, training, and going into combat. He was also interested in Westerns, and wrote several stories that were published in Western-themed magazines. But Hill thought the real reason Rescorla left the military was that he didn't want any more men to die in his arms.

Hill went back to Vietnam and stayed until 1969, specializing in guerrilla tactics and unconventional warfare, subjects that he had taught at Fort Benning. He retired from the Army in 1975, and moved to St. Augustine, where he ran a construction business and converted to Islam. He had begun studying the religion in 1958, in Lebanon, and had learned Arabic. With blond hair and blue eyes, he stood out at most mosques, but people thought he was from Nuristan, a region of Afghanistan whose inhabitants are known for their Nordic features.

Although Hill had left the Army, his heart was in combat. On two occasions in the nineteen-eighties, he fought, without pay, as a mujahid against the Soviets in Afghanistan, working with Ahmed Shah Massoud, the fighter who led the Northern Alliance forces until last September, when he was assassinated. Hill helped found the first mosque in Jacksonville, and taught Rescorla to speak Arabic. But his devotion to Islam had its limits. Several years ago, he took up smoking and drinking again.

After leaving Oklahoma, Rescorla

moved to South Carolina, where he taught criminal justice at the University of South Carolina for three years and published a textbook on the subject. He left for higher-paying jobs in corporate security, joining Dean Witter in 1985. He moved to New Jersey and began commuting to Manhattan. Throughout these years, Hill and Rescorla remained close, speaking on the phone every other day, usually at around three-thirty in the afternoon, except when Hill was on a clandestine mission or couldn't get to a phone. Then he would write Rescorla long letters.

Rescorla's office at Dean Witter was in the World Trade Center. The firm, which merged with Morgan Stanley in 1997, eventually occupied twenty-two floors in the south tower, and several floors in a building nearby. Rescorla's office was on the forty-fourth floor of the south tower. Because of Hill's training in counterterrorism, in 1990 Rescorla asked him to come up and take a look at the security situation. "He knew I could be an evil-minded bastard," Hill recalls. At the World Trade Center, Rescorla asked him a simple question: "How would you take this out?" Hill looked around, and asked to see the basement. They walked down an entrance ramp into a parking garage; there was no visible security, and no one stopped them. "This is a soft touch," Hill said, pointing to a load-bearing column easily accessible in the middle of the space. "I'd drive a truck full of explosives in here, walk out, and light it off."

As a result of Hill's observations and his own, Rescorla arranged a meeting with a security official for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which managed the building. "They told Rick to kiss off," Hill recalled. "They told him, 'You lease your stories, you worry about that. The rest of the building is not your concern.' " (A Port Authority spokesman says that security "took into account all known threats at that time," and "was better than in most office buildings in New York.")

Less than three years later, on February 26, 1993, a truck bomb exploded in the basement of the World Trade Center. As soon as Rescorla got all of the company's employees out of the building, he called Hill. "Did you see what happened?" Hill had just seen the footage on TV. "Get your ass up here," Rescorla said. "I'll buy your ticket." Hill flew to New York, and began working as a consultant to Rescorla. He helped Rescorla do an analysis of the security measures at the Trade Center, and commented on drafts. When Rescorla and Hill began their work, no arrests had yet been made, but Rescorla suspected that the bomb had been planted by Muslims, probably Palestinians, or that an Iraqi colonel of engineers might have orchestrated the attack. Hill let his beard grow and visited several mosques in New Jersey, showing up at dawn for morning prayers. He fell into conversation, speaking fluent Arabic, taking an anti-American line and espousing pro-Islamic views. Radical anti-American and militant Islamic views weren't hard to coax out of his fellow-worshippers. His interviews formed the basis for much of Rescorla's analysis, which concluded that the attack was likely planned by a radical imam at a mosque in New York or New Jersey. The prediction proved uncannily accurate. Followers of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, a radical Muslim cleric in Brooklyn, were convicted of the bombing.

According to Hill, Rescorla concluded that because the World Trade Center was the tallest building in New York, situated at the heart of Wall Street, and a symbol of American economic might, it was likely to remain a target of anti-American militants. At Hill's urging, he told his superiors that, while the bombing of the Trade Center and numerous other recent acts of Islamic terrorism had been technologically unsophisticated, Muslim terrorists were showing increasing technological and tactical awareness, and were getting better. Hill's research had uncovered the existence of groups, connected to some of the New Jersey mosques, whose goal was to travel around talking to young people and recruiting the radicals among them.

Rescorla and Hill also sketched a scenario of what the next attack might look like. The city targeted might be New York, Washington, or Philadelphia, or even all three. Drawing on his research for the novel on the air-cavalry unit, Rescorla envisioned an air attack on the Twin Towers, probably an air-cargo plane travelling from the Middle East or Europe to Kennedy or Newark airport, loaded with explosives or chemical or biological weapons. Rescorla also discussed his theories with another close friend, Fred McBee, a fellow-writer he'd met at the University of Oklahoma. He told McBee that he'd spoken up at company board meetings about unconventional threats, such as "dirty" bombs, small "artillery nukes," and anthrax. He followed events in the Middle East closely. "He assumed that it would be the terrorists' mission to bring the Trade Center down," McBee said.

Rescorla concluded that the company should leave the World Trade Center and build quarters in New Jersey, preferably a three- or four-story complex spread over a large area. He pointed out that many employees al-

EL TORO
ZIEGLER

ready commuted from New Jersey and would welcome the change. He warned that Manhattan's limited bridge and tunnel connections meant that it could be easily cut off, and transportation and communications disrupted. Moreover, the World Trade Center space was expensive compared with real estate in the suburbs.

The World Trade Center lease didn't expire until 2006, however. Rescorla and his colleagues stayed in Manhattan, and in the meantime Rescorla worked out an evacuation plan for the company's twenty-two floors. At a command from him, which would come over the intercom system, all employees were instructed to move to the emergency staircases. Starting with the top floor, they were to prepare to march downstairs in twos, so that someone would be alongside to help if anyone stumbled. As the last pair from one floor reached the floor below, employees from that floor would fall in behind them. The drill was practiced twice a year. A few people made fun of it and resisted, but Rescorla tolerated no dissent, demanding military precision and insisting on a clearly defined command system. As he told Hill, he was simply following the "Eight 'P's," a mnemonic that had been drummed into them in the military: "Proper prior planning and preparation prevents piss-poor performance."

For Rescorla personally, a company move to New Jersey would shorten his commute, which, he told Hill, was exhausting him. For a while, he considered moving to a place in New Jersey just across the Hudson from the Trade Center—a Portuguese neighborhood in Newark. Rescorla loved Portuguese food and the warm ambience of the Portuguese community, and was even learning Portuguese. He told Hill that he had his eye on a former firehouse that was for sale. His idea was to turn the upstairs into an apartment and use the ground floor as a garage and gym. But then he stopped talking about the firehouse.

SUCCESS

Her dealer, who handled successful artists,
    was a successful dealer,
and his Christmas party, too, was a success:

we all knew it, for weren't we all there?
    And the successful artist
being handled in her eighth decade knew it

too, although she was so old and had been so
    unsuccessful for so long
that she seemed to pay no mind to anyone.

She sat quite still, her rosy scalp glistening
    through her rather thin white hair,
and gave no sign of hearing, or ignoring,

any of our successful conversations.
    Above the chair she sat in
(like a furnished bone) loomed the decorative

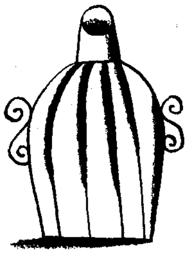
focus of the long room which had been handled
    by a successful designer

Over their long friendship, Hill and Rescorla had often discussed exploits with women. Hill had been Rescorla's best man when he married his first wife, in Dallas in 1972, and he counselled Rescorla through his divorce. Although Hill respected women, and had been married to his own wife, Patricia, for forty-one years, he otherwise preferred the company of men. What he was interested in, as he put it, was "hunting, fishing, shooting people, good stories, and drinking beer." His wife wouldn't go along with the extreme subservience of women practiced in Islam, and had refused to convert, which was fine with Hill, but the Islamic separation of the sexes appealed to him. Most of his conversations about women focussed on sex, so he was surprised when Rescorla mentioned, in one of their afternoon phone calls, that he'd met an "interesting" woman. "Someone I met while jogging."

"What kind of breast line does she have?" Hill asked.

"This is a nice lady."

"You better be careful of nice ladies."



But Susan Greer kept cropping up in their talks. "Christ," Hill finally acknowledged, "this looks serious. This isn't just some roll in the hay."

"I think I met the woman of my life," Rescorla replied.

"Get off my ass," Hill said. "You sound like a sophomore in high school."

Over the next months, Hill hardly recognized his best friend, so giddy was Rescorla on the subject of Susan. Finally, Hill decided to see for himself. On the way to Rhode Island for a shotgun competition, he and his wife stopped off in Morristown, and Susan made dinner. It was obvious to Hill that Susan was from a higher social class, which made him a little self-conscious. Still, he could see that she was smitten with Rescorla, and he with her. They couldn't keep their hands off each other. Hill had trouble understanding this behavior in a fifty-nine-year-old man, but there was no denying it.

A month or so later, Rescorla told Hill that he and Susan wanted him to be the best man at their wedding, and they wanted to be married in St. Augustine. He asked Hill to look for a large oak tree where the ceremony could be held. Like much of the population of of skeletal interiors: a Roman male,

oversize and barely under overweight,
every muscle equally
successful—classically nude but not

in the least naked as any man would be.
And as the talk continued
Alice Neel leaned back and looked up into

the forking limbs above her head, a pure
pelvic arch indeed denuded
of the usual embellishment, so that

all that met her eye was a shadowed empty
socket, the mere embouchure
where once unstinting paraphernalia

must have lodged. "Very fragile things, penises,"
she mused, and for a moment
no one there succeeded in saying a word.

—*Richard Howard*

Cornwall, Rescorla's family was of Celtic descent, and the oak figures prominently in Celtic lore. Rescorla kept an old Celtic shield and thought of himself as a Celtic warrior. Hill knew just the place: an oak that stood outside the Castillo de San Marcos, built in the seventeenth century, which would appeal to Rescorla's love of history and Celtic myth. And it was right next to the ocean.

Rick Rescorla and Susan Greer were married on February 20, 1999. The bride wore a Versace suit that the groom had chosen for her, and carried a single calla lily. He wore a pin-striped suit. Hill asked a friend, a local judge and retired brigadier general, to preside at the ceremony. Rescorla's friend Fred McBee came from his home, in South Florida. Afterward, Hill and his wife hosted a reception at a nearby restaurant.

Once Rick and Susan were back in New Jersey, their life settled into a comfortable routine. Every weekday morning, Rescorla drove to Convent Station and caught the six-ten train. He was at his desk in the World Trade Center by 7:30 A.M., and invariably spoke to Susan at eight-fifteen, after he had checked to make sure all of his security staff were at their posts. Sometimes he was so jubilant after their calls that he broke into song. When he arrived home, a little after 6 P.M., Susan and Buddy would be standing at the door. Rick and Susan kept a nature log of life on the pond, recording the births of geese and ducks. On weekends, they continued their explorations of historic sights, art galleries, and antique shops. Susan wasn't deeply religious, but she had always prayed, asking for the strength to get through her marriages, to care for her mother, to educate her children. Now she thanked God every day that she had met Rescorla.

The word "cancer" was never mentioned between them, but Susan was convinced that, in return for everything Rick had given her, she could restore his health by giving him the peace of mind he sought. He was undergoing treatment at a cancer clinic, which required painful injections directly into his stomach every month. He never complained about them, but Susan knew they were an ordeal. He had to lie quietly for hours afterward. He also took an array of pills, which made him constantly thirsty and caused his body to swell. Susan herself had had to quit her job at the bank, because she was suffering from extreme lower-back pain, but she had benefitted from visits to a holistic practitioner. Now she persuaded Rick to accompany her. With Susan's prompting, Rick adhered strictly to the healer's regimen of Chinese herbal liquids, while continuing to get the injections and take the pills.

Hill was skeptical about Rescorla's holistic approach, but he had his own medical problems, and had suffered two heart attacks in two years. Both men, having once been at the peak of fitness and stamina, now chafed at their physical limitations. Rescorla was incensed after the massacre at Columbine High School, in Colorado, in April, 1999, when police surrounded the school but a SWAT team failed to storm the building until the two killers had shot themselves. "Can you believe it?" Rescorla said to Hill. "The police were sitting outside while kids were getting killed. They should have put themselves between the perpetrators and the victims. That was abject cowardice." Hill emphatically agreed. If they were younger, Rescorla said, "we could have flown to Colorado, gone in that building, and ended that shit before the law did."

In May, Rick and Susan took a delayed honeymoon to his boyhood home of Hayle, a harbor community that once bustled with ships exporting tin from Cornish mines, now defunct. He'd been telling her about Hayle since the day they met, and she was eager to see it and meet his friends and relatives, who turned out to be virtually the entire population of the village. Rescorla had played rugby for the town, and was such an outstanding player that many had expected him to make a career of it. Instead, he'd gone off to America, disappearing from their lives. But for the past fifteen years he'd returned every spring, renewing old friendships and visiting his mother, who still lived in a modest stone cottage near the center of town. His best friend was Mervyn Sullivan, who had attended the same grammar school, taking the train with him every day to Penzance. Rescorla's cousin John Daniels owned the local pub, the Cornish Arms. As a boy, Rescorla had been bigger, stronger, more coördinated than anyone else, and he was a natural leader. He'd set a school record in the shot put, which still stands, and he was an avid boxing fan. Once, a professional match was scheduled between a British boxer and an American heavyweight contender named Tami Mauriello. When his friends backed the Englishman, Rescorla proclaimed, "I'm for Tammy." Mauriello won the fight, and the nickname stuck. Everyone in Hayle knew him as Tammy, long after the boxing match had been forgotten.

A visit from Rescorla was an occasion in the small town. The villagers had a vague idea that he had been decorated for heroism in Vietnam, but he never talked about it. He cherished his Cornish heritage, even though he'd gone off and become a success in America, earning a law degree and working for a wealthy investment bank. In some ways, Rescorla seemed more Cornish than his friends who had stayed in Hayle. He knew all the old Cornish songs and the local history. He'd invite people to the pub, throw open the bar, and have them all singing. Rescorla never seemed to forget anyone in the village. One year, he asked John Couch, a former schoolmate, if there was anything he could do for him. Couch thought about it, and said that one thing he'd always wanted was an American silver dollar. A year later, Rescorla brought him one. Rescorla also made a point of visiting his mother's friends, many of them now confined to nursing homes. One of them, Stanley Sullivan, a man in his late eighties who had lost his sight, loved the old British military songs and Cornish folk songs as much as Rescorla—songs like "The White Rose" and "Men of Harlech" (a song featured in one of Rescorla's favorite movies, the 1964 "Zulu"). As he did each year, Rescorla sat on Stanley's bed with his arm around him, and they sang together. Rescorla waited until the announcement that visiting hours were over to sing "The White Rose," which was Stanley's favorite. Stanley tried to sing along but faltered as tears ran down his face.

Throughout the visit, Rescorla seemed eager to show Susan off. When Mervyn Sullivan told him how much he liked her, Rescorla replied, "This is the best thing that ever happened to me." Despite his cancer, he said, he was feeling better than he had in years. "No one's got me yet," he said, referring to his many brushes with death, "and this cancer is not going to get me."

Last April, Rescorla was chosen for induction into the Infantry Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame, and was invited to participate in ceremonies at Fort Benning. After meeting Susan, he had avoided most such occasions, attending few reunions of veterans of the battles in the Ia Drang Valley. He had given some interviews to his Vietnam commander, Lieutenant General Harold Moore, who was working on a book about the campaign, called "We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young." But when Rescorla received a copy of the finished work, which featured a combat photograph of him on the cover, he put it aside without reading it. When he learned that the book was being made into a movie starring Mel Gibson, he told Susan that he had no intention of seeing it. As he frequently said to her, he felt uncomfortable with anything that portrayed him or other survivors as war heroes. "The real heroes are dead," he said.

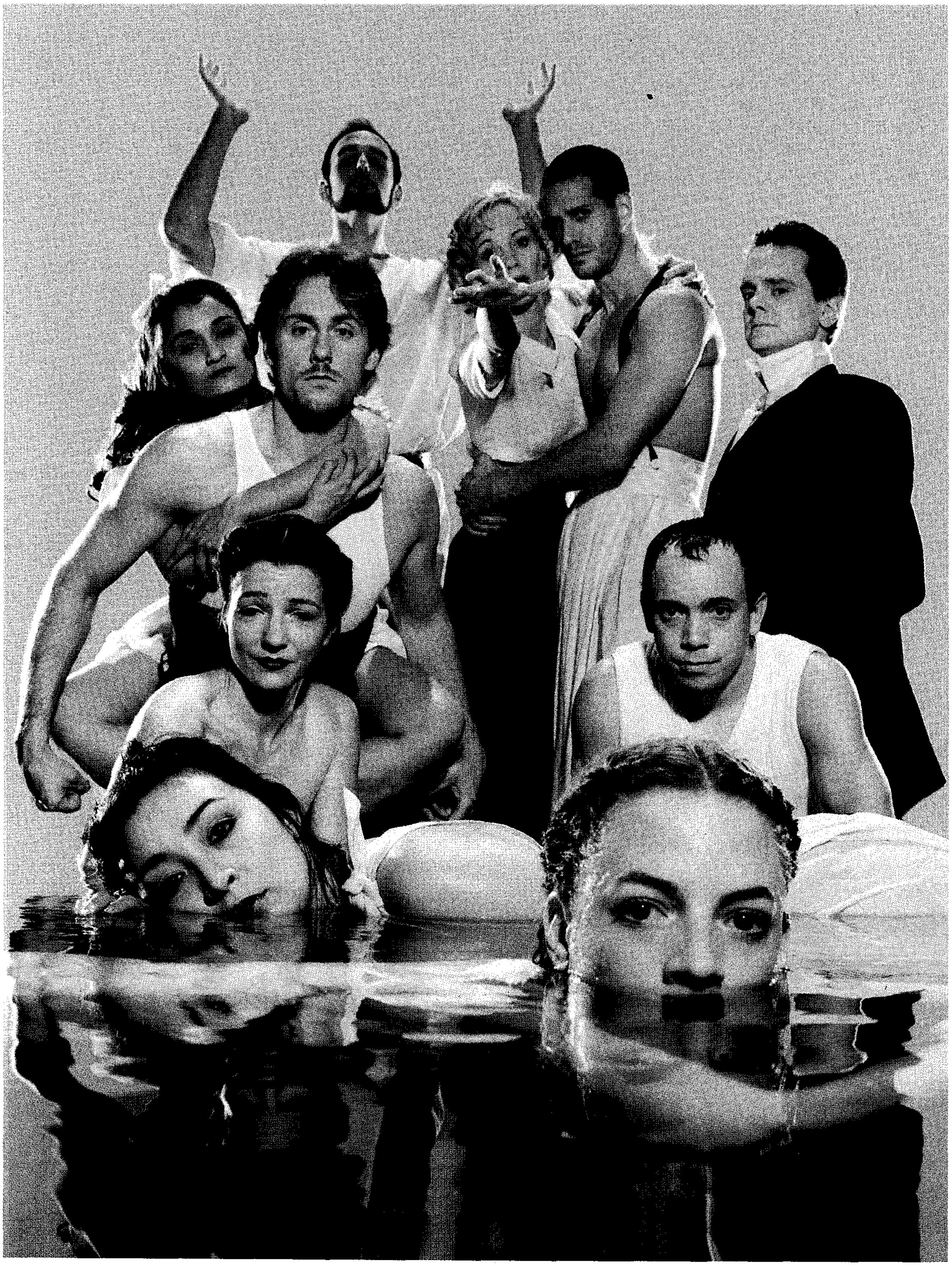
Rescorla made an exception for the Hall of Fame, because it was an opportunity to see Hill, who was having more heart trouble. And Susan was looking forward to the trip, because she was curious to know more about his war experiences and to meet some of the people she'd heard about. But as the trip approached Rick told her he wanted to go alone, so that he could devote his time to Hill. The night before the induction ceremony, Rescorla, Hill, and Patrick Kelly, an engineer who was close to Rescorla in Vietnam, retreated to their room. After a few drinks and some reminiscing, Rescorla said, according to Hill, "Look at us. Hill with a heart attack. Me with cancer. Kelly—he's tall, dumb, and ugly. We're old men and we're going to die with people spoon-feeding us and changing our diapers." They nodded. "Men like us shouldn't go out like this," he said.

"Hear, hear," Kelly said, and they downed their drinks.

Later that month, Rick and Susan took a vacation to New Mexico. Though they had separately travelled all over the world, neither had seen much of the United States. Rick remained fascinated with the West, and they were eager to experience the spiritual aspects of Indian culture. They visited the art galleries and shops in Santa Fe, and drove to Taos, where Rick bought Susan a blouse with hand-painted eagle feathers on it. Rescorla revered the eagle, as a symbol of both American freedom and Native American mysticism. But the trip was cut short. Morgan Stanley was about to lay off fifteen hundred people, and it was the job of security personnel to escort employees out of the building the day they got the news that they had been fired. Rescorla felt it was important that every employee be allowed to leave with dignity, and he escorted some longtime employees himself. But he was shaken by the experience. Some of the people let go had been with the firm for twenty-five years or more. They were expected to pack their belongings and leave by the end of the day. Some broke down and cried in Rescorla's presence.

He'd always enjoyed his work on Wall Street, and took pride in it. But he and Susan began talking more about retirement. In addition to his play about Africa, and other projects, he'd been thinking of writing some kind of memoir. They had begun taking yoga classes together, and had signed up for a more advanced ballroom-dance class. They visited a spa, and Rick made Susan promise to tell no one that he had both a manicure and a pedicure. They wanted more time together, but Rescorla worried about their financial security. The sinking stock market was eroding the savings in his 401(k) retirement plan, and he was still making support payments to his first wife. Maybe he could manage retirement at the end of the year, if the stock market improved and Morgan Stanley's stock went up. Maybe the firm would offer him a buyout.

In any event, his health seemed so much better that he figured he had plenty of time left. He'd just got the results of medical tests showing that the cancer hadn't spread any further and seemed to be in remission. He didn't know if it was the Chinese liquids, the shots,



SHOWCASE BY MATTHIAS CLAMER *"Metamorphoses," Mary Zimmerman's modern staging of several tales from Ovid, set in and around a twenty-seven-foot pool, was a balm for New Yorkers when it opened, last September. The show begins performances on Broadway on February 21st, offering theatregoers a second chance to witness the enduring power of myth.*

the meditation, Susan's devotion, or a combination, but something seemed to be working. He stopped taking the pills that made him so thirsty and caused him to swell. "I'm going to make it to seventy," he confidently predicted.

In the past, he'd warned Susan that he couldn't say how long he'd be around. He wasn't morbid about it, and didn't say much about a funeral, other than that he wanted to be cremated and have his ashes strewn in Hayle. And he had made one other request. He loved to visit a nearby raptor sanctuary to watch eagles, and on one visit he'd told Susan that when he died he wanted her to contribute money to an endowment for the eagles. When they got home that day, Susan wrote something that she planned to have engraved on a plaque at the preserve. "In loving memory of my sweetheart, my soul mate forever, my Celtic hero. . . . Just like the eagle, you have spread your wings, and soared into eternity." They visited the preserve again in mid-August, and Rick reminded her that he wanted her to make a donation. "Sweetheart, I know what you want me to do," she assured him.

As Labor Day passed and fall approached, Susan was in a buoyant mood. Her daughter Alexandra was getting married the second week in September, and the wedding was to be in Tuscany, where the groom's parents lived. Family members were going to stay in a castle owned by a friend of the groom's family, and Rick and Susan had been studying Italian together, listening to instructional tapes in the car. Susan was amazed at how quickly Rick could pick up languages. They planned to visit some of the hill towns after the wedding, and then travel to England to see his mother. They were scheduled to fly to Florence on September 12th, and Susan was busy packing. She'd urged Rick to take off the week of the tenth, but his deputy, Ihab Dana, had already reserved that week to visit his family in Lebanon, and there was an important luncheon on the eleventh. Morgan Stanley Dean Witter had filed suit against the Port Authority over the 1993 bombing, and Rescorla was preparing to give deposition testimony about the inadequate security. So he rose as usual at 4:30 A.M. on the eleventh, and headed into the shower.

Susan could hear him in there, singing an English music-hall tune. He sang in the shower almost every morning. Susan laid out his clothes, a dark-blue pin-striped suit. Rick treated a suit and tie as he had his military uniform, and was contemptuous of the trend toward "casual" business attire. He insisted that his security staff wear suits and ties every day, believing that proper attire induced respect and boosted morale. Many on his staff earned modest salaries, so he sometimes paid for their clothes himself. When he came out of the shower that morning, he continued singing and broke into a dance routine. Then he launched into an impression of the actor Anthony Hopkins. "I've never felt better in my life," he told Susan. He grabbed her around the waist for a few dance steps before he kissed her goodbye. "I love you so," he said, and then left for the train station.

"*Who will carry on when I'm gone? All my kids are in recovery.*"

Susan called him at eight-fifteen, as usual, and he was at his desk. They laughed about his morning song-and-dance routine. "I don't need the movies or the theatre, because I have you," Susan told him.

A half hour later, she was on the phone with one of her daughters when she got another call. She put her daughter on hold; it was another daughter, calling from Manhattan. "Put on the TV!" she yelled. Susan rushed to the set and she saw smoke pouring from the north tower.

She hung up the phone and tried to reach Rick, in the south tower. Barbara Williams, who worked with Rescorla on the forty-fourth floor, told her, "Don't worry. It's fine, it's contained. Rick is getting everyone out. He's out there with the bullhorn now." Susan went back to the TV.

In St. Augustine, Dan Hill was laying tile in his upstairs bathroom when his wife called, "Dan, get down here! An airplane just flew into the World Trade Center. It's a terrible accident." Hill hurried downstairs, and then the phone rang. It was Rescorla, calling from his cell phone.

"Are you watching TV?" he asked. "What do you think?"

"Hard to tell. It could have been an accident, but I can't see a commercial airliner getting that far off."

"I'm evacuating right now," Rescorla said.

Hill could hear Rescorla issuing orders through the bullhorn. He was calm and collected, never raising his voice. Then Hill heard him break into song:

Men of Cornwall stop your dreaming;
Can't you see their spearpoints gleaming?
See their warriors' pennants streaming
To this battlefield.

Men of Cornwall stand ye steady;
It cannot be ever said ye
for the battle were not ready;
Stand and never yield!

Rescorla came back on the phone. "Pack a bag and get up here," he said. "You can be my consultant again." He added that the Port Authority was telling him not to evacuate and to order people to stay at their desks.

"What'd you say?" Hill asked.

"I said, 'Piss off, you son of a bitch,' " Rescorla replied. "Everything above where that plane hit is going to collapse, and it's going to take the whole building with it. I'm getting my people the fuck out of here." Then he said, "I got to go. Get your shit in one basket and get ready to come up."

Hill turned back to the TV and, within minutes, saw the second plane execute a sharp left turn and plunge into the south tower. Susan saw it, too, and frantically phoned her husband's office. No one answered.

About fifteen minutes later, the phone rang. It was Rick. She burst into tears and couldn't talk.

"Stop crying," he told her. "I have to get these people out safely. If something should happen to me, I want you to know I've never been happier. You made my life."

Susan cried even harder, gasping for breath. She felt a stab of fear, because the words sounded like those of someone who wasn't coming back. "No!" she cried, but then he said he had to go. Cell-phone use was being curtailed so as not to interfere with emergency communications.

Susan tried to compose herself. She called Rick's old friend Mervyn Sullivan, in Cornwall. He'd been watching TV that afternoon when a news flash interrupted the program. "Do you know what's happening?" she asked. He told her he'd been watching CNN for the last twenty minutes. "Rick is in there," she said. "He just phoned me and said he has to stay in there and do what he can. It's so dangerous." Susan started to cry, and Sullivan tried to comfort her, saying that Rick was doing what he had to do. But then his Cornish reserve failed him, and he started crying, too.

From the World Trade Center, Rescorla again called Hill. He said he was taking some of his security men and making a final sweep, to make sure no one was left behind, injured, or lost. Then he would evacuate himself. "Call Susan and calm her down," he said. "She's panicking."

Hill reached Susan, who had just got off the phone with Sullivan. "Take it easy," he said, as she continued to sob. "He's been through tight spots before, a million times." Suddenly Susan screamed. Hill turned to look at his own television and saw the south tower collapse. He thought of the words Rescorla had so often used to comfort dying soldiers. "Susan, he'll be O.K.," he said gently. "Take deep breaths. Take it easy. If anyone will survive, Rick will survive."

When Hill hung up, he turned to his wife. Her face was ashen. "Shit," he said. "Rescorla is dead."

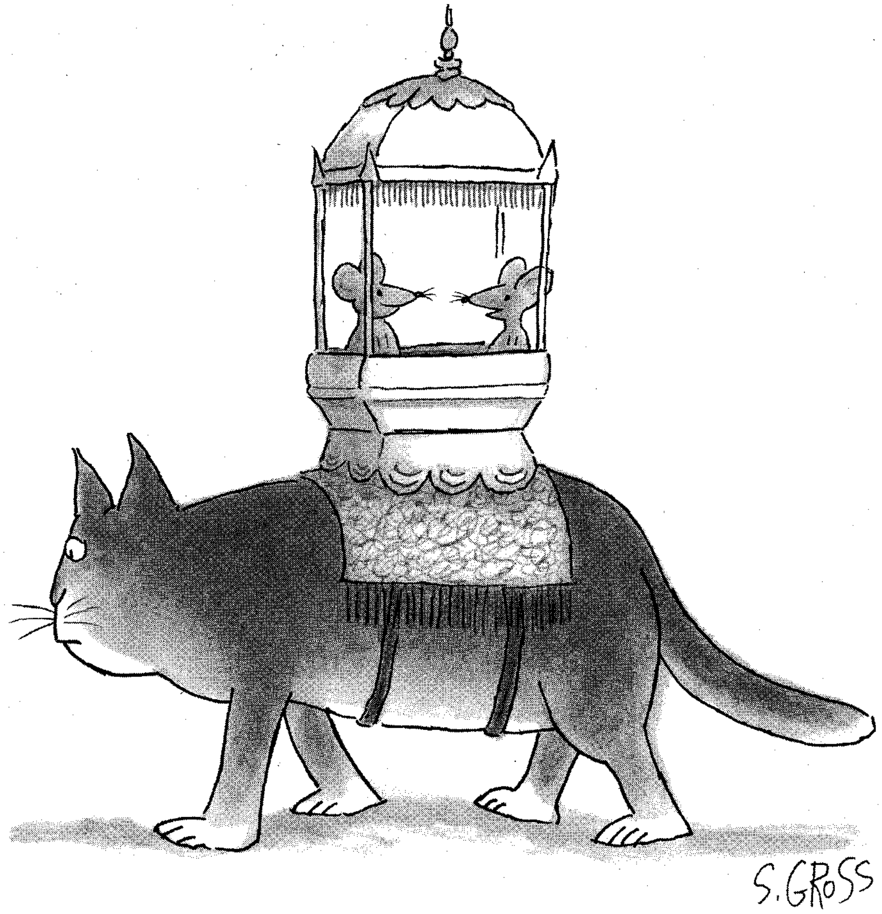
TIPS
B. Smaller

"How can we know who we are when the best marketing consultants of our time don't know?"

Susan ran from the town house into her front yard. There was no one in sight. She ran to a neighbor's house two doors down. She could hear screams from other houses. (The husbands of two other women on the street also worked in the building.) Susan telephoned her daughters. She desperately wanted one of them to be with her, but the daughters who lived in Manhattan couldn't leave, because the bridges and tunnels had been closed. Susan tried to call Rick's son, but there wasn't any answer. She reached his daughter, Kim, and she came to the house. "Dad's going to be O.K.," she insisted. She said she was sure Rick had got out, and was probably helping with rescue efforts. He would surely call once he reached a phone, just as he had after the 1993 bombing.

As the day faded, Susan turned on the lights in the house and lit candles. Her daughters and neighbors joined her for a prayer vigil. The holistic practitioner came. So did a Vietnam colleague of Rick's. Hill called frequently from Florida. Other Vietnam veterans called and sent E-mails.

Her friends finally persuaded Susan to try to sleep. She took the suit Rick had worn on Monday and carefully laid it in his place in their bed. She could smell Rick in the fabric. She lay down, but found herself speculating that he was trapped in an air pocket under the rubble. She understood that a person might survive several days without water or food. Susan clutched his suit



"Eddie, you are one hell of a mouse!"

and breathed deeply into it, as though by doing so she could give him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

On Friday, Philip Purcell, the chairman of Morgan Stanley, called and left a message saying he was saddened that Rescorla was still missing. On Sunday, Purcell called again. Susan had dreaded hearing what he told her: Morgan Stanley had concluded it was unlikely that any more survivors would be found. The firm was holding a memorial service for the victims on September 20th, and he offered her a limousine for the trip from Morristown. Susan said that she would take the train. A human-resources counsellor from Morgan Stanley met her at the station.

At the service, Purcell gave thanks for the thirty-seven hundred Morgan Stanley employees whose lives were spared, and thanks "for the heroism of our own people." He said, "We know some stayed behind or went back. They were like the Good Shepherd in the Bible, looking for the one sheep missing from a flock of a hundred." Purcell called Rescorla "a hero."

Survivors of the attack pressed themselves on Susan to offer their thanks, and many called after the service. Susan felt compelled to try to piece together what had happened that day, and asked people if they had seen Rick. She heard many accounts in which Rick, always wearing his suit jacket and tie despite sweating profusely, kept people marching down the right side of the dark staircase, singing into his bullhorn, as firemen and rescue personnel raced up. At one point, he had nearly been overcome by the heat, and had to sit down on the stairs. But he kept singing or speaking reassuringly. "Slow down, pace yourself," he told one group. "Today is a day to be proud to be an American."

Susan learned that at some point he had used his cell phone to report that all Morgan Stanley employees were out of the building. But one of the last to leave, Bob Sloss, told her that, just ten minutes before the building collapsed, he had seen Rescorla on the tenth floor. When Sloss reached him, he told Rescorla to get out himself. "I will as soon as I make sure everyone else is out," Rescorla replied. Then he began climbing back up into the building. That was as far as Susan could get. She tossed at night trying to imagine what happened next. Had Rick heard and felt the beginning of the building's collapse? Had he known what was coming? These thoughts kept her awake, night after night.

She still clung to some faint hope that Rick was alive, but she was quickly swept into the bureaucracy of the investigation and the relief efforts. Two Morristown policemen came to the house and questioned her extensively. Then Morgan Stanley arranged for her to go to Pier 94, where she brought a hairbrush of Rick's for a DNA sample. There was confusion at the site, because Rick's daughter and Susan's daughter had already begun separate folders, which meant that Rick had been counted as a victim twice. Three weeks later, Susan received a certified envelope containing a death certificate. She wasn't prepared for what she read: "Cause of death: homicide." She hadn't thought of it as murder, but of course it was. She started sobbing.

In October, Susan's mortgage payment came due. Though her husband had earned a good salary at Morgan Stanley, he wasn't paid like an investment banker, and, after alimony and child support, they weren't wealthy. Their town house was attractive but hardly ostentatious; the mortgage and maintenance payments combined would barely rent a studio apartment in a Manhattan high-rise. Susan had to draw on a home-equity line of credit they'd opened to help pay for Rick's memorial at the raptor preserve. Susan read that contributions were pouring in to the National Red Cross, but when she called she was asked, "Off the top of your head, what are your monthly expenses?" When she couldn't immediately answer, she was told she'd have to submit copies of all her bills.

Susan had also read that Morgan Stanley had started a fund for victims and had made a ten-million-dollar contribution. As a widow of a Morgan Stanley employee, Susan was entitled to certain defined benefits, but she had to complete extensive paperwork, and none of it had arrived. Susan hated to ask for more immediate help, but she called Morgan Stanley, and was referred to someone in personnel. "What is this victims' fund?" she asked. "It's strictly voluntary," she was told, and nothing was yet being disbursed. "Are you in dire need?" the woman asked. Susan burst into tears. It was humiliating. She was in dire need of the husband she would never see again.

Susan felt that she was all but reduced to begging for money. She appealed to the United Way of Morristown, which did come to her assistance. And the National Red Cross eventually sent a check. It isn't yet clear what she can expect from the various funds established to assist victims or from Morgan Stanley, but eventual payments are likely to be generous.

On October 11th, Susan decided that she wanted to see the site. One of her daughters and the human-resources representative met her in Manhattan, and they were taken to Ground Zero. It was a beautiful autumn day. If you looked away from the site, at the buildings gleaming in the sunlight, it was almost as if nothing had happened. Susan made herself stare at the ashes and rubble in the vast pit where the Trade Center had once stood. The stench was awful. She noticed that things as seemingly fragile as office papers were still visible in the debris, but she couldn't make out anything else. She concluded that they would never find her husband's body, not even a piece of it. As she looked at the wreckage, she felt that his spirit was gone.

On October 27th, Susan held a memorial service for her husband at the raptor preserve. She invited only a small group of people: her daughters, Rick's two children and their mother, the holistic practitioner, one of Rick's friends from Vietnam, and a lifelong friend of Susan's. Hill and his wife drove up from Florida. The group filed into the preserve followed by a single bagpiper. During the brief ceremony, Susan recited "The White Rose," and then a hawk, recently restored to health, was released into freedom. Hill wished that he could have covered his hands in Rescorla's blood, as Rescorla had done so many times in Vietnam. But he, too, was certain that no trace of Rescorla would ever be found.

Rescorla's heroism on September 11th was quickly brought to national attention by the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, the Associated Press, and the *Wall Street Journal*. The Washington *Post* followed, on October 28th, with a long and insightful account, by Michael Greenwald, of Rescorla's life and "epic death, one of those inspirational hero-tales that have sprouted like wildflowers from the Twin Towers rubble." The Morristown police paid tribute to Rescorla at a fund-raising dinner. Susan donated the Mark VIII, which had been left in the station parking lot, for charitable auction as a "hero's car." There was a memorial service in Hayle, too, attended by the head of Morgan Stanley in London, at which Rescorla was eulogized by Mervyn Sullivan as "a beautiful man," someone "who had a hug for everybody." Several days later, at Westminster Abbey, there was a tribute for the British victims, which the Queen attended. Rescorla's mother received a letter of condolence from Prince Charles. Susan was interviewed by the BBC, and she profusely thanked Britain for its unwavering support of America in the crisis, something she knew would have meant a lot to her husband.

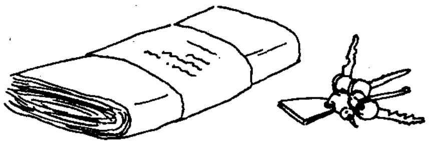
Susan travelled to Washington on Veterans Day weekend for a reunion of veterans of the battles of Ia Drang, even though she felt sure that Rick would not have gone himself. An added impetus was the forthcoming release of the movie "We Were Soldiers Once." Clips from the movie were going to be shown, and Hollywood stars were expected. In the event, only one, Sam Elliot, showed up, and he hugged and kissed Susan. But the evening turned into a tribute to Rescorla. "To those of you who knew Rescorla, we lost a brother," Larry Gwin began. "We lost one of the best men we've ever known. For those of you who don't know Rick Rescorla, he was a warrior, a leader, and a friend. He was the bravest man I ever saw."

Susan says that she is grateful for all the recognition her husband is receiving, even though, she is careful to add, it isn't something Rick himself would have wanted. "I don't need to be told that Rick was a hero," she says. "He was my hero. That's all that matters to me." It's often a strain, she acknowledges, to play the role of the grateful hero's widow when she has been left alone to face a future bereft of the man she waited so long for. After all, what distinguishes Rescorla from many of the victims is that he could have come out alive with the other Morgan Stanley survivors.

"What's really difficult for me is that I know he had a choice," Susan says. "He chose to go back in there. I know he would never have left until everyone was safe, until his mission was accomplished. That was his nature. That was the man I loved. So I can understand why he went back. What I can't understand is why I was left behind."

Dan Hill says that Susan will understand someday, as he does. "What she doesn't understand is that she knew him for four or five years. She knew a sixty-two-year-old man with cancer. I knew him as a hundred-and-eighty-pound, six-foot-one piece of human machinery that would not quit, that did not know defeat, that would not back off one inch. In the middle of the greatest battle of Vietnam, he was singing to the troops, saying we're going to rip them a new asshole, when everyone else was worrying about dying. If he had come out of that building and someone died who he hadn't tried to save, he would have had to commit suicide.

"I've tried to tell Susan this, in a way, but she's not ready yet for the truth. In the next weeks or months, I'll get her down here, and we'll take a walk along the ocean, and I'll explain these things. You see, for Rick Rescorla, this was a natural death. People like Rick, they don't die old men. They aren't destined for that and it isn't right for them to do so. It just isn't right, by God, for them to become feeble, old, and helpless sons of bitches. There are certain men born in this world, and they're supposed to die setting an example for the rest of the weak bastards we're surrounded with." ♦



LIFE AND LETTERS

TOUGH GUY

The mystery of Dashiell Hammett.

BY CLAUDIA ROTH PIERPONT

At a party in Hollywood in the spring of 1935, Dashiell Hammett was asked by Gertrude Stein to solve a literary mystery. Why is it, she began, that in the nineteenth century men succeeded in writing about so many different varieties of men, and women were limited to creating heroines who were merely versions of themselves—she mentioned Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot—yet in the twentieth century this situation was reversed? Nowadays, Stein pointed out, it was the men who portrayed only themselves, and why should this be so? Stein reasonably assumed that Hammett, a hard-drinking ex-detective whose photograph had appeared on the cover of his latest novel, "The Thin Man," about a hard-drinking ex-detective, might be in a position to know.

The party that evening was given in Stein's honor, and Hammett was the one person in Hollywood she'd asked to meet. Although he had at first taken the invitation for an April Fools' joke, such tributes were no longer much of a surprise. Hammett had been "duh toast of duh intellectuals" (in Edmund Wilson's disgusted phrase) ever since "The Maltese Falcon," published in 1930, had introduced a new type of tough-guy hero in matching tough-guy prose: a tight-lipped, street-smart style, determinedly flat despite flickers of amusement and startlingly devoid of most of the familiar processes of consciousness. Readers were riveted, and critics were quick to announce the newest development in the creation of an American language. It was the kind of achievement that Stein and other literary radicals had been struggling for in their brave obscurities and their unread treatises, and it had emerged from the least likely source: cheap detective stories that large numbers of people actually liked to read, based on the real experience of a man on a job that just happened to involve unlimited amounts of violence, sexual intrigue, and moral devastation.

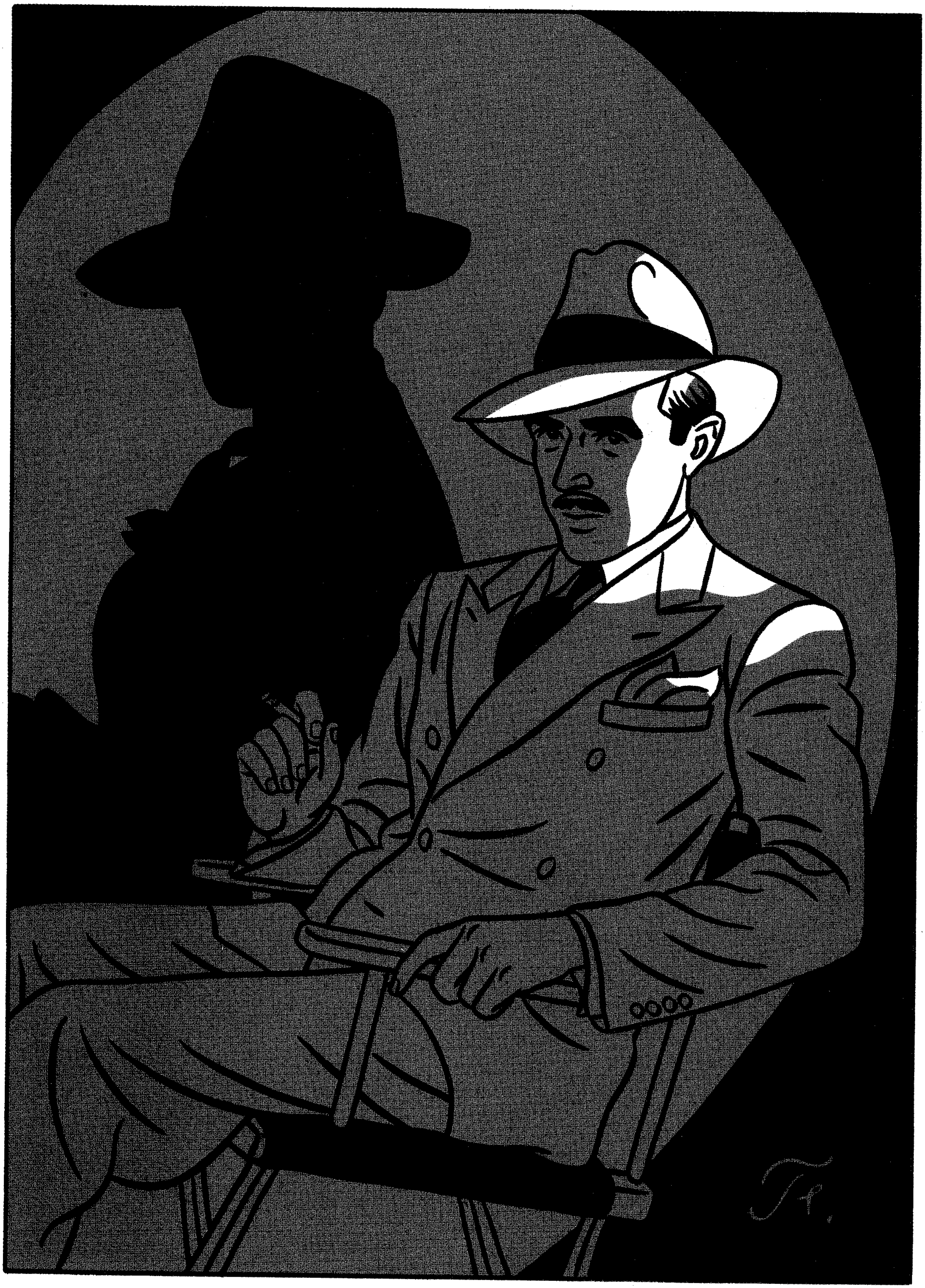
The Library of America's new Hammett collection, "Crime Stories and Other Writings," contains a poignant textual note explaining that one of the stories could not be taken from Hammett's original version because no copies of the magazine it appeared in still exist. Few are likely to mourn the January, 1928, issue of *Mystery Stories*, one of about seventy "pulps" then on the market—"pulp" as a category denoted the low quality of the paper, and presumably also of the contents and the readership—but the contrast of this rough extinction with the smooth, acid-free immortality of the volume at hand does point up the cultural irony of Hammett's career. (His first pulp story, actually called "Immortality," has disappeared without a trace.) But the contrast also points up the irony of the sweeping cultural mandate of the Library of America, for, as it turns out, the salvaged story—"This King Business," printed from a later version—is hardly worth the effort of reading once.

And it is far from the only disappointment here. Hammett produced about ninety stories (and five novels) in the dozen active years of his career, many of them for badly needed money—he was capable of knocking out five thousand words a day—and many clearly executed beneath the level of his engaged attention. Of course, he also produced whiz-bang tales that exhibit the best of what the pulps could offer, and a few that transcend formula in the strict music of Hammett's uniquely deadpan dialogue, or in the verbal loop-the-loop of lines like "Give me my rhino instead of lip and I'll pull my freight" (which in context makes perfect sense). Also beyond formula are occasional set pieces that suspend the action in an almost hallucinatory spell; these read like intrusions from a different genre or a darker mind, as when the detective in "The Tenth Clew" nearly drowns, and spends several pages succumbing to the lulling drag of going under. The current collection contains one perfect story—"The Scorched Face," published in 1925—which demonstrates how imaginative wit can transform even the crudest material into an exquisite whirring toy, a rococo clock with cops chasing crooks in circles and tumbling forth to chime the hour.

But the most extraordinary aspect of these stories is their long and echoing influence: in the pulps, Hammett developed not just a literary style but the style of an era. The indelible characters that he went on to produce in his novels—Sam Spade, Nick and Nora Charles, even Asta the schnauzer—were resilient enough to launch careers in radio, comic strips, and, of course, movies, where Hammett's low-down glamour and stark masculine charm have been a distinctive force from the early thirties to last year's "The Score." In the long and fractured hall of American cultural mirrors, it is easy to lose track of the original image. Today, when Bob Dylan allows that his favorite film is Truffaut's "Shoot the Piano Player," in which Charles Aznavour replayed Humphrey Bogart playing Hammett's idea of the ultimate urban hero, we must realize that there is still a lot, for better and worse, that we owe him.

The quintessential masculine style was the work of a writer who grew up believing that being a man was a near guarantee of moral corruption. Samuel Dashiell Hammett was born in 1894 in southern Maryland, on land that could have passed for a farm if his father had not been preoccupied with drinking and women and looking for easier ways to make a living. His beloved mother, who suffered from tuberculosis, is reported to have held to the loudly voiced conviction that men were a no-good lot. Sam, her bright and curious middle child—

FLOCH



In the twenties, Hammett, like Hemingway and Fitzgerald, sought a unique language to express a unique point of view.

one biographer has him reading Kant at thirteen—was given reasonable proof of her view when he was forced to leave school at fourteen to help with his father's latest failing business. There followed several years of predictable menial jobs, and predictable drinking and resentment, until he joined the Pinkerton Agency, becoming a detective at twenty-one. The job caught his imagination; for the rest of his life, he told different versions of a story about being asked to find a stolen Ferris wheel.

In June, 1918, longing to get away from home, Hammett enlisted in the Army, but he'd got no farther than a camp in Maryland when he contracted influenza; by the following spring, he had full-blown t.b. Most of his remaining time on base was spent in the hospital, and he was discharged with a small disability pension after less than a year of service. He was twenty-five, six feet one and a half inches tall, a hundred and forty pounds, and a physical ruin. And there was nowhere to go but home again, coughing like his mother now and drinking like his father.

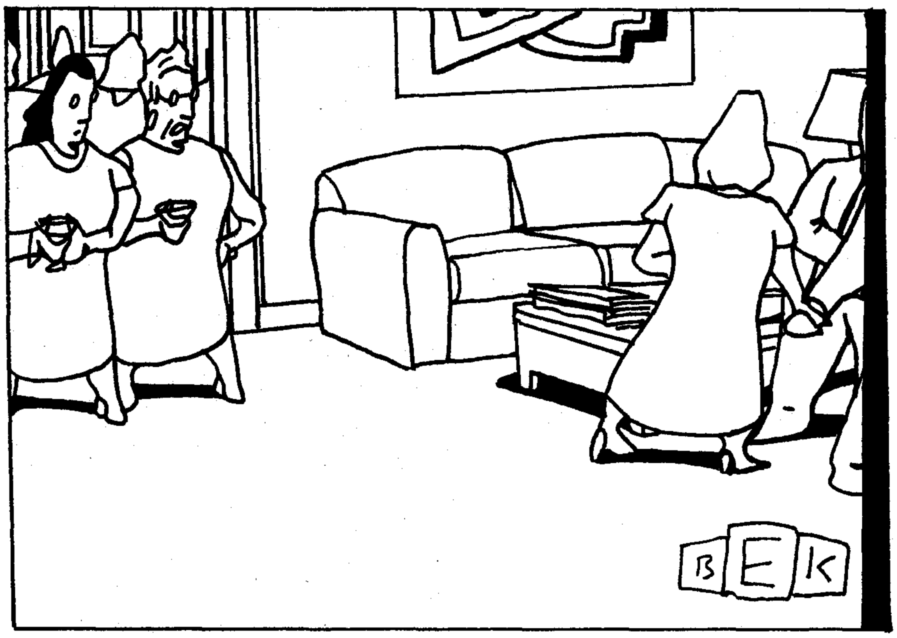
The early nineteen-twenties was a period of continual, debilitating illness. Once he had gained a little weight, he left his family for good; he skipped his mother's funeral a few years later, and it was twenty years before he saw his father again. Rejoining Pinkerton's, he headed west, where agents were in demand for brutal union-busting work. He was back in the hospital in a matter of months. In 1921, barely convalescent, he married a pretty and pregnant nurse; they moved to San Francisco, where, through medical rather than moral failings, he was unable to support his small family. He worked for Pinkerton's again until his next collapse. Resigned at last to being incapable of physical work, he haunted the library, read enough to make up for his interrupted schooling, and began to write.

His poetry meant the most to him, but it was the detective stories that sold. His best market was a crime-story pulp called *Black Mask*, which specialized in a new kind of all-American violence—no more mischief in the vicarage—and where he was publishing regularly by 1923. This was the year his weight went down to a hundred and thirty-one and his t.b. flared up dangerously; at times, he wasn't able to cross his bedroom without relying on a line of chairs to hold him up. Poor, sick, unemployed, drinking to forget his condition until his condition forced him to stop drinking, Hammett sat down and composed a new myth of the indomitable American male.

"I want a man to clean this pig-sty of a Poisonville for me, to smoke out the rats, little and big. It's a man's job. Are you a man?" The speaker is the leading tycoon of a Western mining town, who has brought in union-busting thugs and can't get rid of them; the detective he is hiring is not impressed with the terms of the offer. "What's the use of getting poetic about it?" asks the Continental Op, which is short for operative of the Continental Detective Agency. Middle-aged, short, and woefully overweight, Hammett's Op, who made his début in 1923, is nevertheless the first fully "hardboiled" hero in American letters. He believes that emotions are a nuisance during business hours, and all his hours are business hours. He shoots a beautiful woman in the leg rather than let her walk out on a rap. Hammett wrote thirty-seven stories and two novels about him without giving him a name, and without providing a single character who gets close enough to want to call him by one.

"I don't like eloquence," the Op says in "Zigzags of Treachery" (1924). "If it isn't effective enough to pierce your hide, it's tiresome; and if it is effective enough, then it muddles your thoughts." This is a rare confession—uncomfortably close to an attempt at eloquence—of a sentiment that became the basis of Hammett's style, which manages to leave out almost everything that can't be expressed in a crayon drawing or summed up in a shrug, and which relies, in its warmest descriptive passages, on words like "nice." ("Her eyes were blue, her mouth red, her teeth white," he writes of one beauty, "and she had a nose. Without getting steamed up over the details, she was nice.") For all his cheery comic-strip bravado, Hammett's reticence ties him to the generation of English war poets who rejected the rhetoric that had lured men to the front. It also ties him to Hemingway, to whom Hammett was relentlessly compared, and whose postwar indictment of all "abstract words such as glory, honor, courage" was the first commandment of the era's literary faith.

The term "hardboiled" had come into contemporary usage as soldiers' lingo during the war, when it was used to describe the tougher species of drill sergeant; it was given literary currency in the twenties by *Black Mask*. Hammett, having missed the war, tested his hero's physical courage instead against armies of crooks and crooked cops, and his moral resistance against beautiful women, that newly revamped enemy of soldier and noncombatant alike. The beginnings of film noir are evident three years before



"She's on her fifth soul mate."

"Someday I hope to have a whole complex of caves."

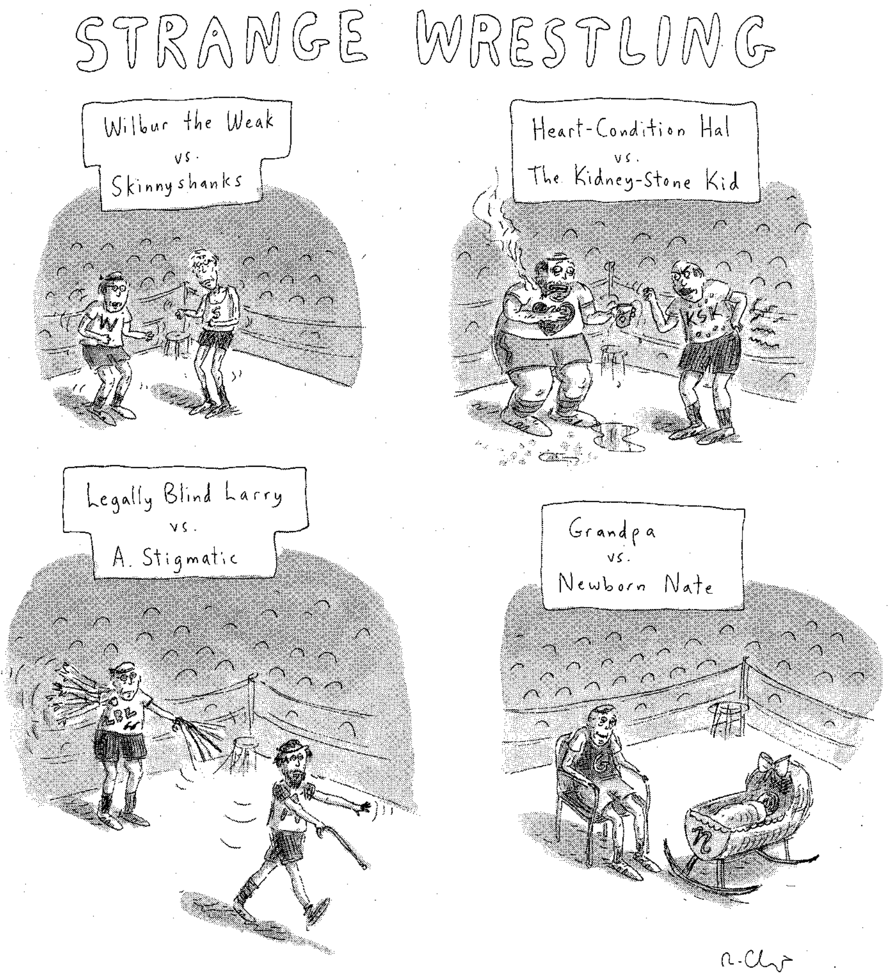
the talkies, in Hammett's 1924 story "The Girl with the Silver Eyes," in which the Op confronts head on the destruction a woman can wreak. In a scene that still packs tremendous tension, the lowest hophead stool pigeon on the entire West Coast, one Porky Grout, plants himself squarely in front of the Op's speeding car in order to protect the Girl from being nabbed: the Op sees a crazily determined white face looming up against the glass; then the windshield flies off and the road is clear again. "She had done that to Porky Grout," he reminds himself after he has nabbed the Girl anyway, as she inches ever nearer to him across the seat of the Porky-spattered car, "and he hadn't even been human! A slimy reptile whose highest thought had been a skinful of dope had gone grimly to death that she might get away." When the Girl makes her inevitable play for the Op—and freedom—he has his answer ready. "You're beautiful as all hell!" he shouts, flinging her back against the door; then he hauls her in for arrest.

There is something of inverted chivalry in the attitude: the power attributed to women to ennoble and destroy, the fear, the need for self-protection. And it wasn't present only in Hammett, of course. Many blame the era's sexual jitters on the new experiment of female emancipation, and it is tempting to compare it with the waves of sexual fear inspired by black men after the country's earlier Emancipation—fear based on the assumption that retribution was on its way. The Op is, after all, protecting his honor from ravishment. If one adds the new threat posed by women to the questions about manliness and courage that the war set loose, one hardly knows how to weigh the contribution of a writer's individual psychic wounds. Hemingway's biographers have based equally credible cases for his machismo on his experience in the war, which ended with an explosion in a trench and shrapnel in both legs, and on the sexual confusion of his early childhood, when his domineering mother dressed him in his sister's clothes. Hammett's life offers neither shrapnel nor infantile cross-dressing to elucidate a controlling masculine myth that was more strictly defined and tightly defended even than Hemingway's, an ideal so stoically closemouthed that it eventually stranded him in silence. By the time he tried to figure it out himself, it was too late.

"Spade had no original. He is a dream man," Hammett said. "He is what most of the private detectives I worked with would like to have been." Hammett worked on "The Maltese Falcon" for nearly a year. The novel made its début in 1929, as a serial in *Black Mask*, but it was, as Hammett knew, on a different order of achievement from anything he'd ever done. Of its type—just the kind of qualification that enraged Hammett—it is a perfect work, nearly classical in its austerity, its smooth meshing of parts, and the unnamed presence of so many big, old-fashioned themes: trust and guilt and the great Jamesian theme of renunciation, which Hammett claimed to have adapted from "The Wings of the Dove." Whatever its source, "The Maltese Falcon" does take on the same daunting task as the most resounding lyric novels of the twenties—"The Sun Also Rises," "The Great Gatsby"—by seeking a unique language to express a unique point of view.

It is the point of view of a man to whom Hammett gave his own first name, Samuel, and the physical appearance of the Devil—a heavily muscled "blond satan" (Hammett was reading Spengler as well as James, and probably had Nietzsche's "blond beast" in mind), with long yellow eyes and a wolfish smile. Evidence of the bruised idealism and quaking anger that suggest the moral heights from which he has fallen is confined to the slightest shifts in his physiognomy: a deepened line, a flush of red. Most of the time, however, Spade is inscrutable, and the reader is put in something of the position of a timorous heroine in a pulp romance. Small wonder that "The Maltese Falcon" became what we would today call a crossover hit, bringing not only highbrows but women to a genre customarily known for driving both of these finicky audiences away. Over "the magnificent Spade," Dorothy Parker confided, she'd gone "mooning about in a daze of love such as I had not known for any character in literature since I encountered Sir Launcelot at the age of nine."

A devil ought to be able to handle


STRANGE WRESTLING
Wilbur the Weak vs. Skinnyshanks
W
S
Heart-Condition Hal vs. The Kidney-Stone Kid
KSK
Legally Blind Larry vs. A. Stigmatic
LBL
Grandpa vs. Newborn Nate
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even women who are beautiful as hell, and Spade gets his chance with Brigid O'Shaughnessy, the paradigmatic femme fatale. To Brigid's predictable coloring-book attributes Hammett added a body "erect and high-breasted" and "without angularity anywhere." Hammett's editor worried about the steaminess of her rapport with Spade—and also about the obvious homosexuality of the novel's crooks—but Hammett refused to make any substantial changes. Spade goes to bed with Brigid, and he forces her to strip to be sure she hasn't palmed a thousand-dollar bill. But at the end, of course, he finds it necessary to turn her down and turn her in. Brigid is, after all, just another cold-blooded killer in heels.

There would be three movies made of "The Maltese Falcon," the first in 1931, just a year after the publication of the book. It is not surprising that the novel had such appeal for Hollywood, although Hammett had originally voiced very different aspirations. In March, 1928, he had written to his publisher, Blanche Knopf, about his plans to adapt the "stream-of-consciousness method" to a new detective novel. He was going to enter the detective's mind, he told her, reveal his impressions and follow his thoughts: this was to be Sam Spade as Leopold Bloom, not Launcelot. But a few days after sending the letter, Hammett received one himself, from the head of the Fox Film Corporation, asking to look at some of his stories. He promptly fired off a second letter to Knopf, informing her of an important change in his artistic plans: he would now be writing only in "objective and filmable forms." In the finished novel, Spade is viewed from the outside only, as Humphrey Bogart would be a decade later: we are granted no access to his mind. "The Maltese Falcon" may have been the first book to be conceived as a movie before it was written.

John Huston's version of "The Maltese Falcon" (1941)—the third to be made, and arguably the first classic of film noir—is generally faithful to the book. There are, needless to say, a few exceptions: Bogart's Spade doesn't get to sleep with Mary Astor's Brigid, and he doesn't make her strip. And there is a larger concession to Hollywood sensibilities. In one of the most wrenchingly beloved of all movie endings, Spade forces himself to resist Brigid's pleas and hands her over to the cops. Mary Astor stares straight ahead, unblinking, as the bars of the elevator gate close her in, like the bars of the prison she's headed for. Hammett, however, closed the book with an even more chilling coda: Spade returns to his office on Monday morning, to the ranks of small, corrupted souls and ways, and realizes that this is where he belongs. It is the only time we ever see him shiver.

There is one section of "The Maltese Falcon" that could not be filmed, and for many readers it is the most important story Hammett ever told. A dreamlike interruption in events, it is a parable that Spade relates to Brigid about a man called Flitcraft, dutiful husband and father of two, who was nearly hit by a falling beam while walking to lunch one day. Instead of going back to work, Flitcraft disappeared. "He went like that," Spade says, in what may be Hammett's most unexpected and beautiful phrase, "like a fist when you open your hand." His narrow escape had taught this sane and orderly man that life is neither orderly nor sane, that all our human patterns are merely imposed, and he went away in order to fall in step with life. He was not unkind; the love he bore his family "was not of the sort that would make absence painful," and he left plenty of money behind. He travelled for a while, Spade relates, but he ended up living in a city near the one he'd fled, selling cars and playing golf, with a second wife hardly different from the first. The moral: one can attempt to adjust one's life to falling beams but will readjust as soon as the shock wears off.

"How perfectly fascinating," Brigid replies when Spade is finished, and changes the subject back to herself. Others, however, have assumed that Spade here reveals the existential angst at the bottom of his soul; this three-page parable has lent Hammett's entire body of work a philosophical aura, as though he were a kind of Albert Camus *avant la* *lettre*. The parable can also be used to justify the fact that Spade forms no lasting connections with other people—why bother in a world where all is so easily undone?—and, by extension, Hammett's own unsteady record in the same regard. At the time that he was writing "The Maltese Falcon," Hammett was no longer living with his wife and children—they now had two small daughters—ostensibly because of the danger of infection presented by his t.b. But he had already launched a series of affairs, and in the fall of 1929 he moved to New York with a writer named Nell Martin, to oversee his new novel's publication. Unlike Flitcraft, however, his absence was painful to his family, and he left almost no money behind.

That fall, in the few months that he lived with Martin, Hammett wrote the only one of his books in which the hero betrays the basic principle of the masculine code: he runs off, to New York, with his best friend's girl. "The Glass Key," the darkest and most dire of Hammett's works, was his farewell to the hardboiled genre. Like a bad Hollywood dream, the book is filled with ominous Freudian symbols—the breakable key, an attack of writhing snakes, a killer who murders his own son—and with an out-of-control violence that brings its worst force to bear on the hero himself. In the book's longest sustained episode, Hammett's tall, thin, tubercular stand-in is beaten repeatedly by sadistic thugs. It isn't a fight scene but a torture scene, bordering on the surreal, and it goes on for several sickeningly drawn-out pages. "He's a . . . a God-damned massacrist, that's what he is," one of the thugs cheerfully observes—demonstrating that Freudian notions have sifted down even to the bottom of the social snake pit—before he turns to the hero just to check: "You know what a massacrist is?"

By one definition, it's someone who gets what he thinks he deserves. But whatever Hammett felt he deserved at the end of 1929—and whatever his variously afflicted protagonists suggest that he felt he deserved at any time—what he got was fame, fortune, and great reviews. "The Maltese Falcon," published in early 1930, was found to exhibit both the "absolute distinction of real art" and the "genuine presence of the myth." Sam Spade was a "real man"—at last!—coming after so many high-minded, effeminate detectives; one reviewer judged Hammett's writing to be better than Hemingway's, "since it conceals not softness but hardness." Hammett quickly became a star, a dazzling man-about-town, with his chiselled features and crown of silver hair and his taste for fancy suits; in piquant contrast, his much touted detective past gave him the air of being as authentically hardboiled as his books. He was already a part of the myth himself. And he was on his way to Hollywood, to write films for actors who would merely play the imperturbably cool modern hero that Hammett really seemed to be.

Lillian Hellman thought so the moment she laid eyes on him. It was November of 1930, in Hollywood. He was just coming off a bender, and was perhaps a bit rumpled, as she recalled, but he was without doubt "the hottest thing" in town; she was twenty-five, married to a well-connected writer named Arthur Kober, and had a job reading scripts at M-G-M. They were at Bing Crosby's opening at the Roosevelt Hotel when the lights began to dim and Hellman, at a table with her husband and Darryl Zanuck and the Gershwins, caught a glimpse of the tall, angular figure passing by; she found out his name and was off so fast she was able to walk him the rest of the way to the men's room. By March, she was his darling Lily, in 1932 she got a divorce, and the rest is the stuff of expertly manipulated legend: nearly thirty years of love and loathing and consuming faithlessness and ultimately unbreakable regard. Hellman was feisty and smart and ambitious—everything that a small Jewish woman without beauty had to be even to enter, much less conquer, the worlds she did. At the start, she might have been mistaken for a muse; there is no other way to explain the extraordinary change that marks "The Thin Man," which Hammett called a detective novel but which is really an amiable social comedy, its hero a married ex-detective who is supported by his wonderfully smart-mouthed wife while he enjoys a new career as a nearly full-time drunk.

He started the novel in New York, in late 1932, when he had blown every cent of his Hollywood money on lavish hotel suites and weeklong parties and a lot of other things he couldn't remember. (For the better part of a year, he couldn't remember to send any money to his wife and children.) That fall, he sneaked out of the Pierre Hotel, leaving a thousand-dollar tab, and checked into a fleabag joint managed by Nathanael West, who rented out rooms to writers on the cheap; by May, 1933, he had finished the manuscript. Hammett told Hellman that she was his inspiration for Nora Charles, a tribute indeed—even if he told her that she was also the book's silly young girl and the villainess—since Nora, aside from being beautiful and rich and twenty-six, was one of the most clever and engagingly open heroines of the day. It is easy to see why Nick couldn't remain within the Hammett tradition with Nora around to puncture his ego at just the point where she fears he's going to do something that will get him hurt. ("I know bullets bounce off you. You don't have to prove it to me.")

It was Nora's sexual openness that got the manuscript rejected by the major magazines, until *Redbook* finally ran an expurgated version, in December, 1933. Her teasing question to Nick after he'd wrestled with a female suspect—"Didn't you have an erection?"—had to be changed, although just a month later Knopf not only published the book with the line intact but based an ad campaign around it. ("Twenty thousand people don't buy a book within three weeks to read a five word question," the ad proclaimed, while dropping a discreet mention of "page 192.") A great many people did buy the book, the cover of which displayed a full-length photo of Hammett, dapper in tweeds and a hat, leaning on a cane. The movie version, released the following year, starts rolling with the same photo of the author, looming high and handsome on the screen. Nevertheless, devoted Hammett readers dismissed "The Thin Man" as a travesty, bitterly complaining that Nick Charles—lazy, rich, soft—was not the man that Hammett used to be.

If anyone appeared to be that man anymore, it was Lillian Hellman. In 1933, Hammett suggested to Hellman that she try writing a play based on a story in a recent true-crimes collection, about two schoolteachers ruined by the lies of a vicious pupil. "The Children's Hour" had a great success on Broadway the following year, and Hellman went on to become the leading female playwright in American theatrical history. By her own account, she owed much of her success to Hammett, who continued to read and advise and who sometimes demanded that she tear things up and start all over—so much did he know, and care. Their professional relationship appears to have continued this way for nearly two decades, up to and including Hellman's 1951 play, "The Autumn Garden," a family drama involving a cruelly womanizing alcoholic artist named Nick, who causes enormous pain to his smart and loving wife, Nina, and who carefully hides the terrible secret that he hasn't finished a painting in twelve years.

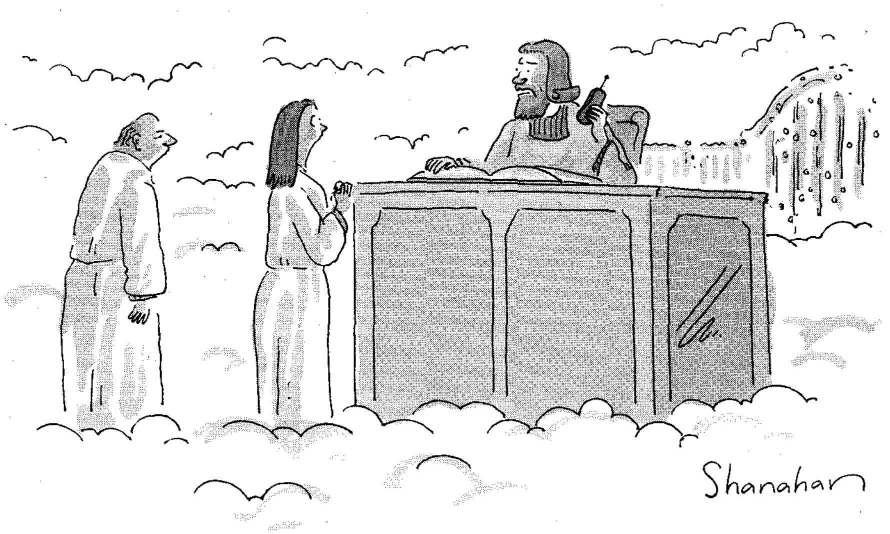
The private travails of the Hammett-Hellman relationship seem to have been accurately exposed here, although Hellman had learned to practice a matching promiscuity, which her lover referred to, with apparent pride, as behaving like a "she-Hammett." Yet even after their relationship ceased to be sexual, in 1941—Hellman relates how he took his revenge for a single rejection on her part by refusing ever to sleep with her again—her jealousy lost none of its sting. Hammett's young female biographer, Diane Johnson, reported feeling under attack even after Hammett's death. During his lifetime, it would seem that Hellman took the only revenge that she could, by means of the art that Hammett had taught her to perfect. Even so, it might be argued that Hellman's account of Nick's artistic impotence was almost charitable: by the time "The Autumn Garden" premièred on Broadway, in March of 1951, Hammett hadn't published a creative word in seventeen years.

It would not have been difficult, at the time, for the world to overlook this silence, in the continuing swirl of glamour and secondhand success. In the thirties, Hammett wrote story lines for two "Thin Man" sequels and several other films, moved back and forth between New York and the Beverly Wilshire Hotel (where he preferred either the penthouse or the King of Siam's suite), dreamed up plots for a Hearst comic strip printed under his name, and steadily drank himself out of his mind and into Lenox Hill Hospital, where he experienced a complete breakdown in 1936. In 1938, he announced a new novel, but he soon returned the advance, with a note saying that he was afraid he was "petering out." That same year, M-G-M paid him eighty thousand dollars, but turned down his draft for another "Thin Man" sequel. It was the last year that Hammett commanded such easy and enormous sums, which was just as well, as a matter of principle if not of economics, for by this time he was almost undoubtedly a member of the Communist Party.

Hellman, a famously indefatigable supporter of the Soviet state, has often taken the blame (or, occasionally, the credit) for Hammett's political conversion, and certainly the man whose original line of work involved union busting hardly seems to have been a natural fellow-traveller. But it was more likely the Spanish Civil War—and the intrepid involvement of Hemingway, among others—that offered him a chance to assert a moral course in the midst of his spectacular dissolution. It is no disparagement of the authenticity of Hammett's principles to note that speaking at rallies and petitioning F.D.R. on behalf of the Loyalists also provided a creditable alternative to facing the more immediate battles of the blank page. Moreover, his new political sympathies took nothing away from his national allegiance, and when the next opportunity for heroism arose, in the fall of 1942, this forty-eight-year-old alcoholic with scars on his lungs and an F.B.I. record managed to enlist as a private in the United States Army. Hellman—who was far from being in control of Hammett's politics or of anything else—remembers the galling phone call in which he gave her the news and told her it was the "happiest day of my life."

These were to be his happiest years, too, as he recalled them, although he saw no combat and faced no tests of courage. Nor did Hammett thrive on male camaraderie. On the contrary, he doesn't appear to have had any close male friends—women were always more willing to bridge his emotional gaps—and he acquired none now. But in the Army Hammett seems to have finally found peace. He was stationed in the Aleutian Islands—the farthest he was ever to travel—and his days consisted of tasks that were easy to fulfill, and of writing letters that fulfilled his personal obligations with a similar ease. "It may be that most of the time I don't want to think about the outer world," he admitted to Hellman, in 1944, in response to her accusations about why he'd enlisted. In 1945, he told her that if he could stay on there he would be able to write a new novel; but after his transfer to the base near Anchorage, with its distracting bars and brothels, he gave it up.

In all the years he was so busy not



"Your cats are fine."

Victoria Roberts

"We missed 'The Fantasticks.'"

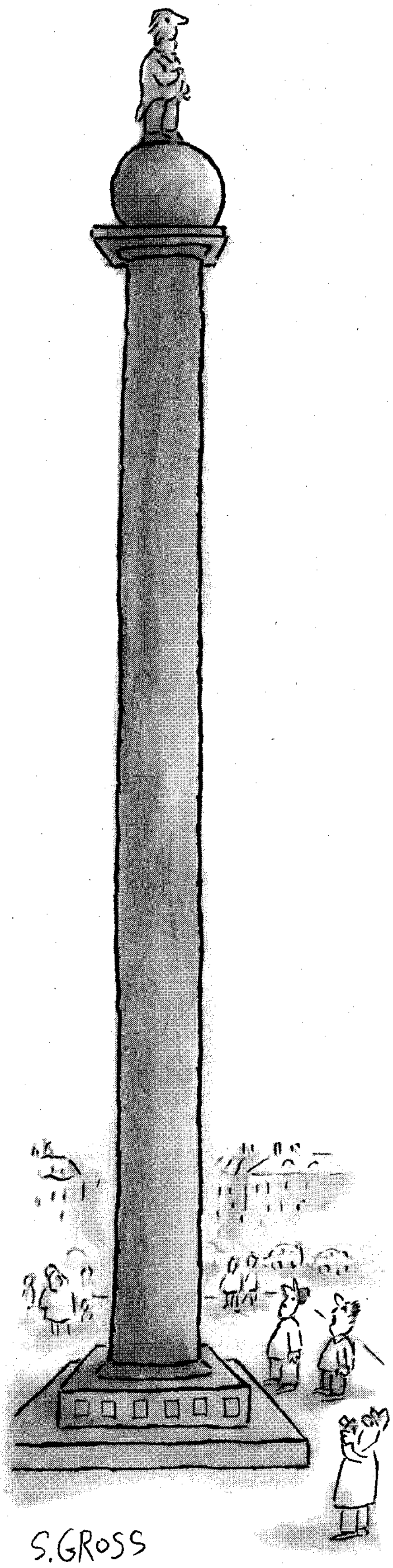
writing, however, Hammett's literary legend only grew. Raymond Chandler, who published his first story in *Black Mask* just as Hammett was bowing out, later groused, "If a character in a detective story says 'Yeah,' the author is automatically a Hammett imitator." Chandler—like James M. Cain and Ross Macdonald after him—paid tribute to Hammett but vigorously distinguished himself from his example. Mystery aficionados may rattle off the easy distinctions between Hammett and Chandler—San Francisco versus Los Angeles, Sam Spade versus Philip Marlowe, the stylistically bare versus the near baroque—but the essential difference is that Chandler displayed the recognizable goals of a gifted novelist with a lively interest in psychology and detail, while Hammett, at his best, was unlike any recognizable sort of writer at all. Here, in a giddy bit from "The Scorched Face," the Op and a helpful cop combine forces to break down a door:

> It shook, but held. We hit it again. Wood we couldn't see tore.
>
> Again.
>
> The door popped away from us. We went through—down a flight of steps—rolling, snowballing down—until a cement floor stopped us.
>
> Pat came back to life first.
>
> "You're a hell of an acrobat," he said. "Get off my neck!"
>
> I stood up. He stood up. We seemed to be dividing the evening between falling on the floor and getting up from the floor.

What sort of style is this, poised between blank verse and slapstick? Chandler, in a particularly Oedipal mood, wrote that he doubted Hammett "had any deliberate artistic aims whatever," although he undermined his claim by also stating that Hammett wrote nothing that was not "implicit in the early novels and short stories of Hemingway," who was himself nothing if not an artist aiming high. Hammett left no doubt that he'd read Hemingway: in the 1927 story "The Main Death," a bored young wife sits smoking and reading "The Sun Also Rises," which had been published the year before. But Hemingway was also clearly aware of Hammett; in that very same novel, he neatly accounts for the emotional divide between the new detective style and his own far more tender portrayal of a man's attempt at unrelenting strength. "It is awfully easy to be hardboiled about everything in the daytime," Hemingway's war-wounded hero, Jake Barnes, confesses, "but at night it is another thing."

Yet, for all Hammett's literary impact, it was in the movies that he made his deepest mark. No author has been better served by Hollywood: in the thirties, the breezily underhanded charm of William Powell and Myrna Loy as Nick and Nora turned a single novel into the longest-running major film series of the era—the last of the five "Thin Man" sequels was made in 1947. Sad-eyed, lisping Humphrey Bogart, whom "The Maltese Falcon" made into a star, accomplished something of the same extraordinary feat when his Sam Spade proved the original for another long, if unofficial, series that eventually drew the masculine ideals of Hemingway ("To Have and Have Not") and Chandler ("The Big Sleep") into the persona of a single seen-it-all, grudging romantic, whose willingness to lose everything but his honor was just what the country needed while getting through the war. The noble renunciation of love for wartime principle at the end of "Casablanca," made a year after "The Maltese Falcon," is unthinkable without Spade's renunciation of Brigid for far less noble motives; the plane that takes Ingrid Bergman up, the elevator that takes Mary Astor down—both leave Bogie conveniently alone with a buddy and his personal peace restored. There is a strange sort of justice in the fact that the truculent antihero brought into existence by the traumas of the First World War should have provided the materials for the most swooningly romantic (if no less truculent) hero of the Second, and Hammett, in playing his part in this complex creation, performed a national service more significant than anything he did in the Army.

Reluctantly returning to the "outer world" in 1945, Hammett continued to earn fame and reasonable fortune through frequent radio adaptations of his books, which were based on scripts that he refused to write or read or even to discuss. Living quietly, he divided his time between Marxist-style politics and Bowery-style drinking, in New York and on Hellman's Westchester farm; beginning in 1946, he lectured on crime fiction and "the possibility of the detective story as a progressive medium in literature" at a Marxist school in lower Manhattan. But the revolutionary possibilities of the genre became apparent sooner than expected when, that same year, Albert Camus arrived in New York for the American publication of "The Stranger," the murder novel whose existential sang-



"In real life, he had acrophobia."

froid was inspired, as the author later revealed, by the great American detective stories and their fast-talking American prose. Camus, dark and handsome in his trenchcoat, told people how pleased he was whenever his resemblance to Humphrey Bogart was pointed out.

At Christmas, 1948, just a year after the adorably drunken William Powell took his final turn as Nick Charles, doctors at Lenox Hill told Hammett that his choices had narrowed to two: he could either give up drinking or die. He shocked everyone who'd ever known him by promising to stop, and then shocked them further by actually putting the bottle down for good. When Hellman later told him how he had defied all expectations, his reported reaction was wide-eyed surprise: he had given his word.

For those who reasonably mourn the tragic toll of alcohol on American writing, it might be pointed out that sobriety did nothing at all for Hammett's work. Whatever he had used the liquor to drown had long gone under, and there was nothing left but time. In 1950, while briefly planning a new novel, he assured a friend that there was no need to worry over lapses in artistic productivity: "Nobody dies young anymore," he offered helpfully.

Hammett's word of honor became an issue of national import in 1951, when he was called before a federal judge in New York to name contributors to the Civil Rights Congress bail fund, of which he was a trustee. This was privileged information: the C.R.C. was a Communist-sponsored group, and the fund was used to gain the release of defendants accused, under the notorious Smith Act, of advocating the overthrow of the government; four had recently jumped bail and couldn't be found. There is significant doubt that Hammett even knew the names that he refused to reveal. He himself never said one way or the other, and he pleaded the Fifth to every question asked. The outcome was, as he had to know—given the example of others who had testified—almost inevitable: a verdict of contempt of court, and a sentence of six months in jail.

Lillian Hellman said she found it irritating when Hammett told people, as he always did, that his time in jail had not been bad at all: the conversation was no sillier than at a New York cocktail party, he liked to say; the food was awful but one could drink milk; and it was possible to be proud of work well done even when that work was cleaning toilets. In fact, the months that Hammett spent in jail, mostly at the Federal Correctional Institution near Ashland, Kentucky, entirely broke his health; he was fifty-seven when he went in, and an old man when he came out. Returning to New York, he couldn't get down the ramp of the plane without stumbling and stopping to rest. (Hellman, who went to meet him at the airport, says she stayed out of sight for a while so he wouldn't see her see him.) And his punishment was far from over.

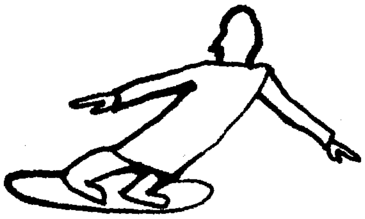
He had become, according to *Hollywood Life* and other publications, "one of the red masterminds of the nation"; Walter Winchell took to calling him "Dashiell Hammett and sickle" and Samovar Spade. All radio shows based on his work were cancelled, and his books went out of print. The I.R.S. attached his income, now nearly nonexistent, for unpaid taxes going back to his time in the Army; his federal debt was ultimately calculated at more than a hundred and forty thousand dollars. In 1953, he was called before a Senate committee, chaired by Joseph McCarthy, that investigated the purchase of books for State Department libraries overseas. His own works were removed from the shelves until President Eisenhower, a Hammett fan, volunteered that he didn't see anything the matter with them.

Dead broke and weak and chronically short of breath, Hammett struggled with his last attempt at a novel, called "Tulip," and managed to write a couple of chapters. He was living alone in a cabin on a friend's estate north of New York City, and an interviewer who sought him out in the mid-fifties described a pathetic has-been, still wearing his pajamas at noon and explaining that he kept three typewriters around "chiefly to remind myself I was once a writer." When getting on by himself proved impossible, he moved into Hellman's East Side apartment, where he spent the last two and a half years of his life. Lung cancer was diagnosed in late 1960, and he died just a few months later, in January, 1961. Hellman has written movingly of rubbing his shoulder when the pain came on, pretending it was only arthritis and hoping that he thought so, too. She tells of entering his room one night, near the end, and finding he had tears in his eyes for the first time in all the years she had known him. "Do you want to talk about it?" she asked. She recalls that he replied, almost with anger, "No. My only chance is not to talk about it." And he never did.

And so she did it for him. Hellman's first publication about Dashiell Hammett was a captivating introduction to a volume of his stories, "The Big Knockover," which she published in 1966. Cynics—and few hardened Hellman observers are anything else—point out that she had bought the copyrights to all his works from the government for a well-calculated pittance, snatching them away from his legal heirs. With her next books, she launched the Hammett-and-Hellman industry—"An Unfinished Woman" in 1969, "Pentimento" in 1973, "Scoundrel Time" in 1976—and made a bundle. Just as her plays dropped into the oblivion of the old-fashioned well-made melodrama, the instinctive dramatist rewrote a life in which the plays hardly figured at all. At the center of Hellman's memoirs is an adventurous political heroine who is loved by a man of almost unearthly moral and physical beauty. In prose that echoed his own spare style, Hellman updated the early Hammett myth and turned him into one of the most romantic heroes in modern fiction: an unforgettable "Dostoyevsky sinner-saint," a stern idealist who preferred silence to the risks that words inevitably posed to the clear and simple truth.

The fact that Hellman's volumes were filled with outright lies—"every word," as Mary McCarthy noted, "including 'and' and 'but' "—was well recognized by the time she died, in 1984, bluffing and suing all the way to the grave. She had not, in fact, travelled to Nazi Berlin to deliver money hidden in a smashing fur hat to an anti-Hitler group; she had not tried to raise money for Hammett's bail in 1951; he had not sent her a note after he'd been sentenced, pleading that she get away to safety—she had simply fled, in fear, to Europe. The list of self-aggrandizing lies is nearly as long as McCarthy implied, and biographies of Hammett are valuable to the degree that the authors steered clear of her "coöperation." (Richard Layman's "Shadow Man" remains the most coolly reliable; Joan Mellen's scathing "Hellman and Hammett" exposes the deceptions one by one.) Looking over Hellman's so-called memoirs now, one regrets the compulsive mendacity, principally for demeaning her own courageous testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, in 1952, and for making us suspicious even of what we wish to believe about her and about the man she seems to have truly loved. But, given the evidence of a woman who couldn't speak without disastrously improving on reality, and a man who couldn't speak at all, how are we to judge? The mystery of Dashiell Hammett may remain forever unsolved.

Hammett himself tried to find a solution in "Tulip." Begun after his release from jail and abandoned in 1953, the would-be novel centers on a rambling and very un-Hammett-like dialogue between two men, called Pop and Tulip, who have come together to hash out Pop's single overwhelming problem: he can no longer write. Hellman included "Tulip" in the collection of stories she published after Hammett's death as a sign of what he was moving toward in his quest for a new literary life. But the idea for the book can be traced all the way back to Hammett's conversation with Gertrude Stein, in 1935, when she asked him why modern men could write only about themselves. Hammett had replied that the answer to her question was simple. In the nineteenth century, he said, men were confident and women were not. In the twentieth century, however, men had lost their confidence; they could imagine themselves as a bit more intriguing, perhaps, or better-looking, but they could venture no farther because they were too afraid to let go of whatever they happened to be. He had thought of writing about a father and son, he told her, just to see if he could create a hero different from himself.



Judging by Hammett's answer, the many novels that he abandoned over the next two decades were attempts at breaking through the fears and limitations that he'd long disguised as forms of strength. "Tulip," however, details a weary internal standoff: the pair of leading characters openly represent experience and creativity, and they agree only on the fact that they cannot get along. "Of course things get dull when you reason the bejesus out of 'em," the lively Tulip scolds, in an attempt to get Pop writing again. Tulip is an odd name for a man, and one thinks inevitably of Lily, and of the whole crushing weight of the feminine imperative against which Hammett defined himself: the tireless urging to feel, to connect, to talk talk talk. But perhaps the most dispiriting aspect of the story is the revelation that Pop and Tulip are not old friends, not a man and a woman, not father and son, but simply parts of the same resignedly unhappy man. When Pop explains, "I had always beaten Tulip by not talking," he admits that he has finally beaten himself.

Silence was always at the edge of Hammett's style. The white space on many of his pages nearly equals the quantity of print, the short lines of dialogue snapping off as soon as the necessary thing is said, if not before. He made inarticulateness into a style and a heroic mode of being; few American writers—not even Gertrude Stein—came so close to the radical purity of words stripped down to their far from routine nakedness. Noun, verb, primary color; no echoes, few implications—small wonder so much of his writing falls flat. The whole enterprise was nearly impossible, like the ideal of living a life of absolute honesty, free of hypocrisy, new every day. It was a treacherous ideal, part nobility and part pathology, and as a writer it brought him to the very end of words. Yet in a few short years Hammett turned out a few short books that have yielded a chorus of voices and a phantasmagoria of beloved images—Sydney Greenstreet frantically hacking at a lead bird with a penknife, William Powell lying on his back and tipsily shooting lights out with a popgun, Bogart grabbing Mary Astor for one short, hard kiss—before the gift just went, like a fist when you open your hand. ♦

FICTION

THE LAUGHTER OF THE GODS

BY JOHN UPDIKE

Benjamin Foster—an ungainly name, carrying to the bearer's own ears a certain formal, distant sound, as if he were a foster child—took an interest, once his father was dead, in how his parents had met, courted, and, deepest in the darkness, conceived him. His mother told him, "We met in the registration line the very first day of college, and the second we clapped eyes on each other we started laughing. And we didn't stop laughing for the whole four years."

"Didn't you date other people, ever?"

" 'Dating' seems to mean more now than it did in the twenties, but no, not really. Nobody else would have anything to do with us. That was our feeling. That was our fear. We were held together by fear, your father and I, a fear that nobody else would have us. We were *freaks*, Benjy."

She looked up, unsmiling but mischievous. Old age had made her tongue even more reckless than it had been, as if testing the echo off the walls of the house where she lived alone, with a deaf and lame old collie.

In the past, their child, their only child, had tried to reassure himself that his parents had not been freaks in college by looking into their yearbook, called *The Amethyst*, bound in padded purple, the year 1927, the college a small Lutheran one on the banks of the Delaware. It was named Agricola, after Johann Agricola, an early associate of Luther's and, in regard to the issue of antinomianism, an adversary for a time.

The senior photos and writeups were arranged not in alphabetical order but as if at a dance, boy paired with girl on facing pages. His parents were thus paired, as were their faithful friends the Mentzers, when Mrs. Mentzer was still a Spangler. Benjamin's mother, under her maiden name of Verna Rahn, was shown with glossy thick bangs. Elsewhere in the yearbook she appeared in a riding outfit with boots and jodhpurs, in a tubelike party dress and a glittering headband, and in a middy blouse with dark neckerchief—the uniform of the hockey team, for which she was listed as co-captain and "right inside." She had been class secretary, her young son learned, and president of the hiking club, "a certain blue-eyed damsel from Firetown, Pa.," one with "a true innate love of nature" who could "ride a horse at breakneck speed." The motto the yearbook editors assigned her was "Fair as a star."

His father's motto was "The cause of wit in others," his nickname was Foss, and his writeup was rather joshing, calling him a "ray of sunshine" and asserting that "no less than a baker's dozen of the fair sex have fallen victims to his winning and jovial disposition." It even more far-fetchedly claimed that his native town in New Jersey had "become famous on account of his brilliance." Yet the photocopied college records that at some point had been tucked into the yearbook showed him getting mostly C's and even D's, where Verna Rahn pulled in A's and B's; she was especially adept in Latin, though Benjamin had never heard her utter a single phrase of it. The college's purpose seemed to be to produce ministers and marriages; pages at the end were devoted to a diary recording the year's flirtations and pairings. The lead item on a page titled "Jokes" was:

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM "PHOENIX RECUMBENT" (1968)

> Frosh (after attending one of Dr. Rutter's hygiene lectures)—"Some terrible things can be caught from kissing."
> Second Frosh—"Right! You ought to see the poor fish my sister caught."

"And yet," Benjamin pointed out to his mother when she was in her seventies, "you and Daddy didn't marry right after college. You didn't marry for how many years after graduation?"

"Two. We were giving each other time to get away, but nothing better occurred to us. We had no imagination, Benjy. We were cowards."

In trying to imagine their attraction, their need to pair off, Benjamin would begin with the fact that they were both tall, his father two inches over six feet and his mother no less than five-eight, awkwardly large for a woman of her generation. She put on weight over the years, but in the yearbook she was slender; young, she looked like him, Benjamin thought, while as he grew old he looked more and more like her—faintly shapeless in the face, with a sly, flirtatious expression to the mouth, as if he were prepared to take back whatever he said. From his mother he had learned the social arts of teasing and sidestepping.

His parents loomed large in his first memories of them—giants in their underwear, shambling with their white flanks and tufts of hair to the bathroom and back. His little room was tucked behind theirs, at the back of the house, but he was often in their bed, it seemed, sick or frightened of the dark. It was a maple four-poster, painted blue-gray and stencilled with a silver crescent moon and several clumsy stars. Benjamin and his mother had done it together; she had made the stencils and he held them while she applied paint. The bed was too high for Ben to climb into by himself at first; once he could hoist himself up, he was often there, as at an observation post, while his mother and father moved about him in semi-nudity, with a docile mute air they lacked in their clothes.

Until he was old enough to make the tub feel crowded, he took baths with his mother, to save hot water in those Depression days. More than sixty years later, he could still recall the sight of his legs receding in the narrow watery space beside her legs, his feet squeezed between one of her hips and the porcelain side of the tub. To rinse his shampooed hair she would hold his head under the faucet until he thought he must drown. His parents, he realized when he was old enough to grasp some social history, were cultural products of the progressive twenties, conditioned to expect a socialist revolution one day and to be unashamed of their bodies. What was natural, his mother believed, was healthy and good, even though germs and parasites could be argued to come from nature as surely as, say, spoonfuls of cod-liver oil. The horrible lasting aftertaste as the thick transparent liquid oozed down his esophagus: that was nature to little Benjamin—that and hay fever and the cat catching robins at the birdbath. He would find their feathers splayed in the grass. He was drawn entirely to the unnatural: to the radio, the movies, the newspapers, the blimp or skywriting airplane that once in a while appeared in the small-town sky.

When he was thirteen they moved from the small-town house to a farmhouse ten miles away, the very house in which his mother had grown up. In these smaller quarters their bodies were placed in closer proximity. Benjamin's grandparents, whose house the house in town had been, occupied one room upstairs, and his parents the other, leaving him a bed in a space next to the stairs; his grandfather would tug his toe in the morning on the way downstairs if it stuck out from the blankets. The walls were thin, and he could hear his parents murmur, sigh, and turn over on their creaking bedsprings. There would be a patting noise and his father's voice making a noise, "*Ooo-ooh*," in appreciation, Benjamin gathered in the dark, of his mother's bulk. "Your mother should have gone onto the burleycue stage instead of marrying me," he would tell his son as they drove into town together. "She had the figure for it, but not the temperament. A better man than I would have talked her into it."

It was under the permissive blanket, somehow, of their country intimacy that Benjamin began to masturbate. It happened one night that, because of the primitive laundry facilities in the basement, he had no clean pajamas, and had to go to bed in his underwear. The unaccustomed sensation of his skin on the sheets stirred him into discovery. A quite magical world of sensation, tight and fresh, opened up; at the climax he would feel as if he were somersaulting, the witness inside his head turned upside down. He was too innocent to think about the stains he left on his sheets, and once his mother did mention them in a fit of temper, but the gap between his mother and those upside-down sensations was so vast his mind couldn't bridge it and went blank, so he made no answer. He was never able, in later life, alone or on the body of a woman, to recover quite that initial, upending intensity—that sensation of a sweetening tightness yielding, as it were, a glimpse of icy, annihilating light beneath his feet.

Benjamin never doubted that his mother loved him better than she loved her husband. This knowledge gave him with his father the tolerant good humor with which one treats a defeated rival. When the old man was dead, and Benjamin middle-aged, he tended to cut short, or turn his back on, his mother's offered outpourings of marital resentment. Even the wealth of sympathy cards—Earl Foster had been a public-school teacher, a Sunday-school teacher, a man of public good works—had inflamed her sense of grievance, the way being at last rich aggravates the injustice of having been short-changed years ago. She let the tinted envelopes pile up, many unopened, on an old brass tray on a side table, and in the days after the funeral made no move to answer them: "What can I say except agree he was a saint? If he was such a saint what does that make me?"

"A fellow-saint?" Benjamin suggested, wary of what he had long ago learned to recognize as his mother in a dangerous mood.

"Not by a far cry. Have you ever heard the expression 'Street angel, house devil'? That was your daddy."

"What did he do devilish?"

"You don't want to hear it. Or do you? Maybe you should."

"No, you're right, Mother, I don't."

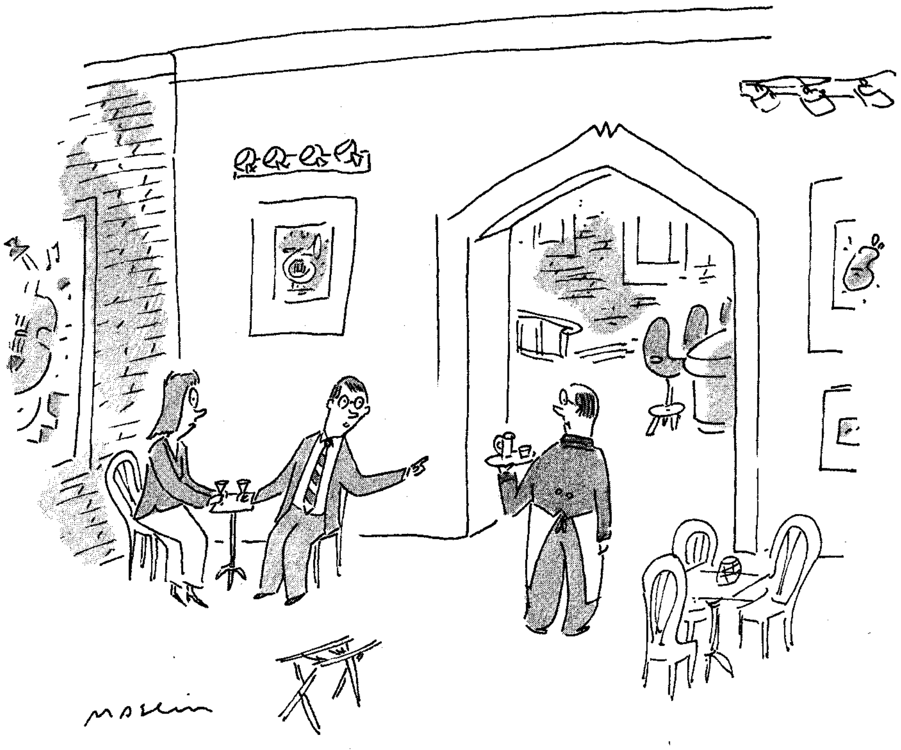
She went on, sitting stubbornly at the kitchen table in her black widow's dress with its green jade brooch, "When we first met, at college, my dad still had his money, and dressed me in what was considered high style, in what to your father's eyes looked like too broad a check, with too bright a bow at the neck. He was from New Jersey, and his people were terribly conservative, as you know—Presbyterians, down to the bone."

"I know." Though in fact his father all the while he knew him had been a Lutheran deacon; he had done his best to blend into his wife's country.

"That was why he laughed at me; he said I looked like a Ziegfeld girl at a barn dance. And then," she went on, "the weekend we got married, the last day of August and terribly hot, Dad had come down a peg or two in the world, and for some reason the best thing I could find to put on was this wool suit that turned out to be *suf*focating. I nearly fainted on the train, and sweated big spots into it. My mother-in-law was reported to have said she thought only colored people got married in August. She was sick with diabetes already, the whole ceremony had been rushed together so she wouldn't hear of it ahead of time, and when she did she fainted dead away. At least the other Fosters said she did. Your daddy was meant to be the one who didn't get married and who supported their mother in her sad decline. I realized when the others told me—it must have been my sister-in-law, she was always free with her news—I realized that there were two kinds of woman, the kind who really did faint and those who just nearly did, like me. When we got into our tiny stateroom in the Pullman, your father said I smelled like a pig."

"Oh, no!" Benjamin felt obliged to protest, at the risk of tipping her into an even more menacing, unpredictable temper.

"He was right," she said. "I was drenched, and ruined the dress. 'Pig' wasn't the word he used. Our so-called honeymoon, that whole first year when I was following him around with the surveying crew, all through the coal regions, we kept staying in these cheap boardinghouses that were really cathouses. You'd meet the girls on the stairs dragging up customers almost too drunk to walk. In the daytime everybody except me was sleeping. I got a world of reading done—all the Russians, Balzac. I never could take to Dickens—too jokey. One of the madams told me that what you look for in a girl is a high arch to the foot. That tells you all you need to know. I had flat feet, though she was too polite to point it out. I couldn't compete with your father's ideas of those girls on the stairs—thank heaven I got pregnant with you and could come home to my father's house. I wish all these people scribbling how your



"Waiter—could we have a little more table over here?"

father was such a saint could have heard his language when it was just the two of us stuck together, like dogs in rut."

She gestured with disgust at the stack of sympathy notes in the brass tray, and when Benjamin left the next day they had vanished, unanswered.

He had hungered, through his childhood, for the signs of happy union that he saw in the parents of his friends, a secret physical prosperity that oozed into society as respectable good cheer. His parents almost never went out to parties, and when they did his father was usually sick from the rich food and unaccustomed liquor. He had a Presbyterian stomach. But their old college friends the Mentzers held an annual New Year's party, which included other couples mated at Agricola, and off his parents would go into the dark with what Benjamin imagined as their old collegiate gaiety. At other reunion occasions he had heard Mrs. Mentzer, the once beautiful Ethel Spangler, call his father "Fossie" with a fond purr that almost materialized the unimaginable conqueror of "no less than a baker's dozen of the fair sex."

It was with a daughter of this crowd, not the Mentzers' but the Reifsneiders', that Benjamin had his first real date—his first parentally approved appointment with the fair sex. He was old enough to drive, by a few months, and went off in a sports jacket, necktie, and clean shirt carefully harmonized by his clothes-conscious mother. He and Ada went to the movies and afterward to the PenSupreme on the Alton Pike for hamburgers and ice-cream sodas. They attended different high schools and didn't have much to talk about except their parents and the movie they had just seen, yet they managed well enough, so that, parked in front of her dark house, he felt entitled to kiss her, which she seemed to expect. Her sallow face had regular features but her lips seemed hard and cool, with a chill of prepared willingness he did not feel he had earned. He had felt clumsy, overdressed, and not quite right, and assumed her sense of him agreed with his. He never called her again, though she was pretty enough. Whatever it was that must be discovered, the path was not through his parents' youth.

His mother in all the years he knew her had never had a haircut or gone to a hairdresser. Her hair had been going gray as long as he could remember; she bundled it behind in a bun held with hairpins that he frequently found on the floor, when he lived boyishly close to the carpet. When she was a girl, she more than once told him (she told him everything more than once), her mother would do up her hair in braids wound so tight on the top of her head that she wanted to scream. It frightened Benjamin, at night, to see her take out her pins and let her hair down and walk around the upstairs in her slip, looking like a graying witch, just her nose and her eyes peeping out. Years later, in the late sixties, he picked up a plump young hooker in the bar of a Chicago hotel. When they were done, she put her silvery minidress back on and walked around his room combing out her hair, long and uncontained in the sixties style, and it came to him that this was how a woman was supposed to look, like Eve or Mary Magdalene, in an admonitory old woodcut.

There was a hint of admonition, too, in the underwear drawer of his mother's bureau, its tumble of flesh-colored straps and intricate metal fastenings like a web of apparatus in a torture chamber; her girdle and its stocking fasteners—flesh-colored buttons, and wire loops shaped like snowmen—left cruel dents in her flesh, and on one of her feet the little toe was quite bent over the others by tight, pointy shoes.

At night, upstairs in the country house, his father, describing the adventures of his day in the city world, would mumble, and she would begin to laugh, and he would mumble again, and her laughter would be goaded to a half-suppressed shriek, an escape like that of steam, ending in a whimper begging for mercy, and he would mumble once more, and then in the contagion of her renewed glee he, too, would laugh, a few reluctant chuckles that ended the story. In the morning, when Benjamin asked her what had been so funny, she would say, "It's too hard to explain. It's not so much what he says as how he says it that sets me off sometimes. I don't believe he even means to be funny at first, his life has been really a sad one."

But his parents didn't radiate sadness, though their misery and helplessness—their state of being *trapped*—was a frequent theme of their discourse. After

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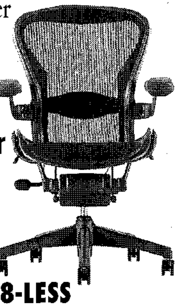

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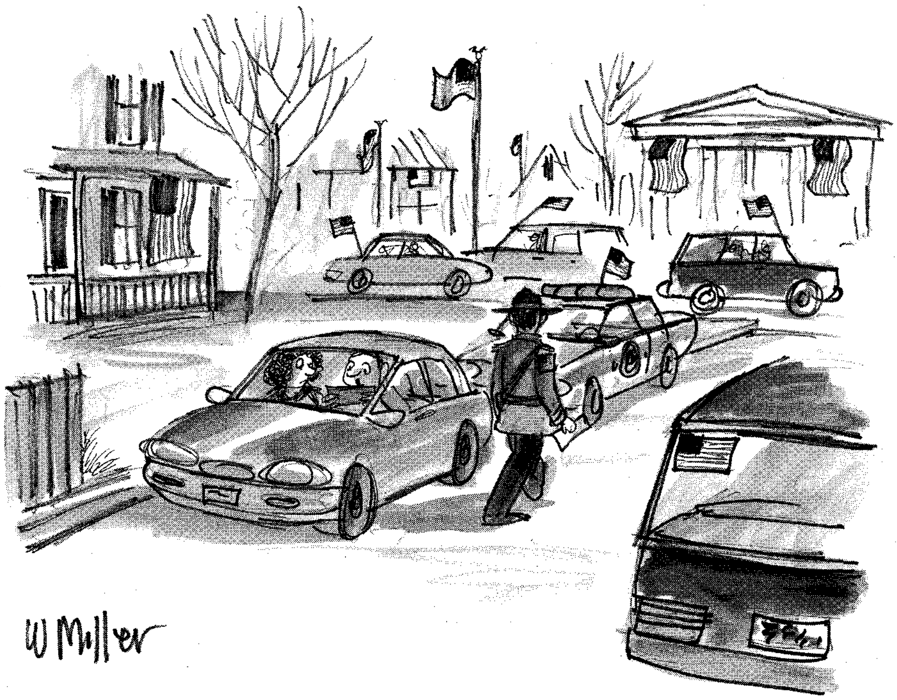

"Flagless in a patriotic zone?"

• •

Benjamin's grandparents were both dead, a new bed was installed in the vacated room, but as far as Ben knew his parents rarely used it, staying in the too high, noisy-springed one with the moon and stars stencilled onto the gray headboard. When, summers, he visited with his growing family, there were too many bodies for the beds, and his parents would sleep on a flat farm wagon in the barn. They made so comical a sight there, uplifted on huge spoked wheels, surrounded by mounds of baled hay and rusted equipment, under motley layers of spare quilts, that his children would run out first thing in the morning, through the dew of the lawn, to catch their grandparents still thus abed, and cheer themselves with the hilarious, comforting sight. The old couple would sit up in greeting, both wearing black wool watchcaps, donned for warmth and to keep dust and dove droppings out of their hair. Pigeons cooed and thrashed in the upper reaches of the barn.

As his mother's widowhood stretched past a decade and into its fifteenth year, it was as if her son, who tried to visit her for a few days every month, had always been the only man in her life. When she spoke of her husband, it was in the tone of startled reminiscence with which she might suddenly recall the dark-eyed little Schlouck boy with whom she had walked to the one-room school down the sandy dirt road that passed along the edge of her parents' farm and over the rise to the main road. "My mother thought his people were too dark," she would say. Or, of her husband: "He was so hipped, after his heart began to act up, on paying in his thousand to the teachers' retirement fund. He said he could see daylight for the first time in his life."

"Daylight?"

"I don't know how much daylight he thought he had left for himself. But he wanted to leave me *set.* Just like the driving. I hadn't driven since my father sold their Biddle and moved into town. But he forced me to drive, he even had me take a course from the high-school instructor, and get my license; he knew that without it I couldn't hang on out here."

"So he *was* a saint," said Benjamin, ironically.

She missed the irony. "He wanted to be. His mother had been terribly religious, so full of good works she often forgot to feed her own family. But he had these doubts. We all had, back then. We read Mencken, Shaw, Wells. Sinclair Lewis. Nothing was sacred. We laughed at everything, even at school, when half the professors were ordained, and half the boys were aimed that way. Of course, we were young—we could afford to laugh. Your father was such a kidder, so good-humored around people who didn't know him, it shocked me at first when he'd get these terrible bouts of depression. 'The blues,' he called them. He'd sit in a chair and not move. Everything disappointed him, especially me."

"Oh, no, I don't think so!" The protest was courteous; Benjamin had long grown used to the idea that his parents' marriage had been a mistake, partially redeemed by his birth.

"Except *my mother,*" his mother went on, looking past him from within the tattered wing chair where she spent most of her days, rousing herself only to feed the pets and change television channels. "He *admired* her. She had a quickness I didn't. She could make money. It had been her management of the farm that had made my father rich, for a while, until he lost it on friends' advice. And he was the only one of my suitors she ever approved of. The funny thing was, like Sammy Schlouck, he was dark. He could take a tan, your father, unlike you and me. We have the type of skin that can only burn."

"Maybe that's what the attraction was. Opposite skin types."

She ignored the idea. "*Was* there an attraction? Or were we just looking for people who would maintain the suffering that we figured we deserved? We both felt embarrassed at having been born. My parents had wanted a boy, and Daddy was the youngest of four, he always felt he was 'one more mouth to feed.' We hadn't had happy childhoods, either of us. Now, you, you did. We were both amazed to see it. We didn't understand how you did it."

"I had loving parents," Benjamin gallantly suggested. Parents, he didn't say, who had no one else to love.

"No," she argued, perversely, "it was something in you, you produced it out of yourself, in this miserable household. Ethel Spangler, after she married Howard Mentzer but before they had a child of their own, came to the house for an afternoon and when she left said to me, 'I hope this child gets some love in his life someday.' "

He laughed, incredulous and gratified. "What a thing to say! And yet you and Daddy kept on with her all those years."

"People used to hang on to each other," said his mother, "for fear that was all there was. Now they let go and latch on to somebody else just like the first."

This was a dig; Benjamin had divorced and remarried twice, but he let it glide by. He saw his mother as the dispenser of more truth than he could bear. When he was seven or eight, and graduated from the shared bathtub, he asked her, having been invited to satisfy his curiosity about the facts of life, if in a woman wee-wee came out of the same place as babies did. Gently, frankly, like the progressive spirit she was, she answered him, but his embarrassment was so intense it quite blotted out her answer, leaving his question to hang in his memory as a perpetual humiliation.

When she died, a long lifetime welled up through its leavings. In a small cedar chest opened by a key in her desk drawer he found, wrapped in a ribbon faded from red to pink, a bundle of letters his father had written to her in the two years between college graduation and their marriage. They were ardent, stiff, earnest. Phrases swam up from the thin creased paper, scented not only with cedar but with, Benjamin imagined, the salt air of Florida, where his father had spent eighteen months: *want to do right by everybody concerned . . . certain you are the mate the good Lord meant me to have . . . Ma has her ups and downs and is brave as hell . . . Ed says the business climate here is bound to turn around, people always pull in their horns after a hurricane . . . miss you every day and especially after work . . . if she takes a turn for the worse . . . be with you on the old sofa in Olinger and kick back my heels and share a good laugh . . . almost chuck it all up and head north on the next freight train but . . . the docs say she has the determination of a saint or a mule . . . can hear your voice as sure as shooting . . . the sunsets come on so quick because of the latitude . . . I'm still your Sheik and you my Agnes Ayres . . . ninety-eight in the shade over by Arcadia . . . or die trying . . .* Benjamin could not bear to read continuously. It was like his mother's too detailed answer to that question; his mind shied away.

His father's handwriting even then, before he got his master's degree, had a schoolteacher's patient legibility; he would lift his pen in the middle of a word, forming each letter. When his mother at last died, he had come up north. The salmon upstream: *or die trying.*

An embossed chocolate box shaped like a heart held proof that his mother had at least once cut her hair. "Verna Rahn's Haircut," she had written in her little back-slanted hand. "June 18, 1926. (Moths ate some of it!)" So this was its second packaging; bound with black thread, it was so long that Benjamin didn't dare pull it from the box, which smelled of cedar and of chocolate. He let the hair stay in its thick coil, nested in tissue paper. Its color was a guileless pale shade of brown with no gray in it—light brown, like that of the girl in the song. A *country* shade, he felt. Experimentally he touched it, and moved his hand quickly away, as if he had presumed to stroke a little girl's fine hair.

And, folded at the bottom, under crocheted blankets and lace tablecloths and an Agricola pennant of purple and gold felt, he found something he could never have given her but his father had: a varsity football sweater, heavy-knit of yellowed white, the chest stiffened by its broad letter, the sleeves pinned up with oversized safety pins that were still there, their rust stains spread into the thick yarn. Another pin, in the back, took a tuck. Somehow this sweater, and the pins that had adjusted its fit on her slender body, gave off heat, mixed with the cool of vanished winters—mild moist Pennsylvania winters, couples walking the campus with unbuckled galoshes, their laughter making small white clouds. His father had come to college on a football scholarship, though he was too tall and ectomorphic for the game, and had kept playing through a series of broken noses that became a feature of his mashed and melancholy face. Photographs survived, of him crouching purposefully in the unpadded leather helmet of the time. Under the folded sweater was a game program that included Agricola's schedule; they had played, amazingly, Cornell and Columbia and Rutgers. The little college had been overmatched, cannon fodder. His father had given his mother his all. He had clothed her in his pain, and their son had tagged on behind, happy to be jealous. ♦

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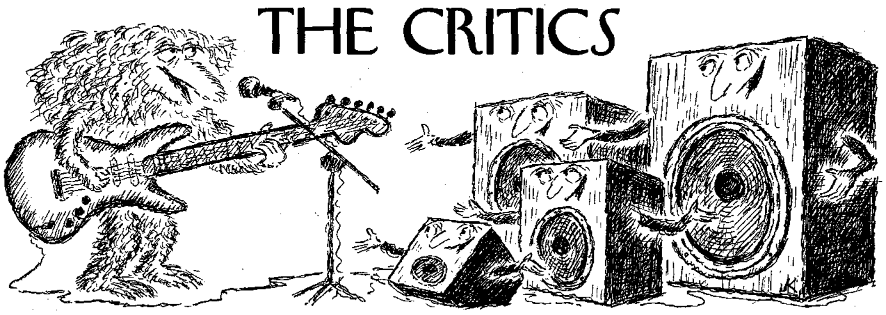
THE CRITICS



"BEWARE" (1994)/TONY SHAFRAZI GALLERY

A CRITIC AT LARGE

MORE HARM THAN GOOD

Surviving the N-word and its meanings.

BY HILTON ALS

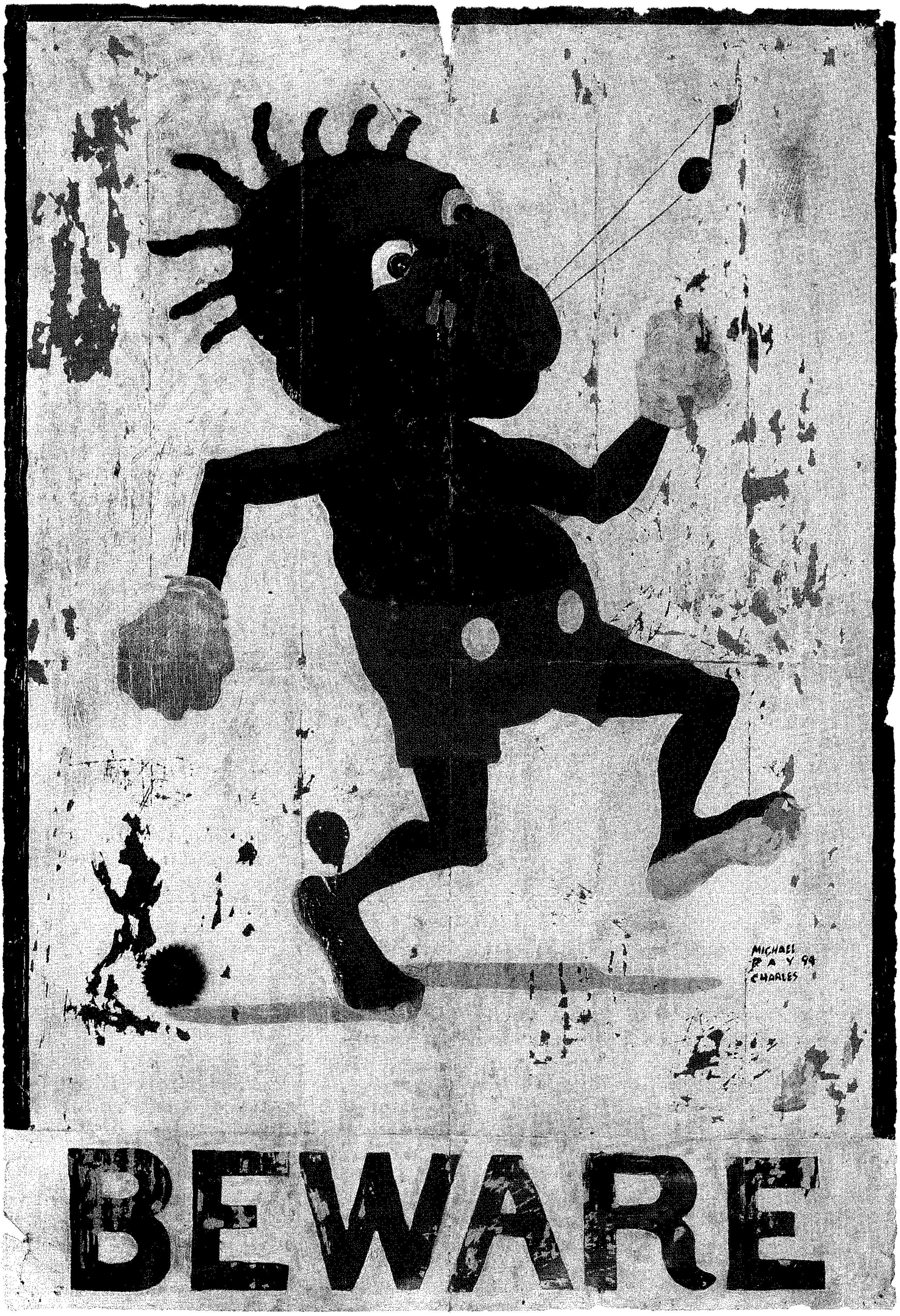
That Jim. Now, there's a nigger for you. Argued over ever since he first appeared, in Mark Twain's 1884 masterpiece, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," Nigger Jim is as dark and emotionally murky as the river that he and Huck Finn are floating on. Desperation is the oar that propels Jim and Huck's raft toward the territory where their freedom lies. Jim is a fugitive slave, and Huck, he's a white boy in all sorts of trouble: for disappearing, for trying to escape his craven Pap, and for disobeying the laws of his own race. After all, he's travelling with a nigger who had the temerity to steal away with a white person's property, which is to say himself. To make matters worse, Jim has a cunning mind. Niggers are like that—they get a little taste of freedom and, before you know it, they want to live by the laws established by and for white men.

On the raft, with the stars above and the trees whispering in the soft air, the promise of freedom loosens Jim's tongue. Huck recounts, "Jim talked out loud all the time while I was talking to myself. He was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free State he would go to saving up money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife, which was owned on a farm . . . and then they would both work to buy the two children, and if their master wouldn't sell them, they'd get an Ab'litionist to go and steal them." It is telling that Jim's revelations are relayed not through direct speech but through the skein of Huck's sensibility. And maybe Huck isn't even aware of what it tells us: no matter what Huck thinks, or might choose, Jim is in his head. "Jim talked out loud all the time while I was talking to myself"—this is a kind of marriage, in which the partners talk out loud and to themselves, influencing, shaping, and finishing one another's sentences.

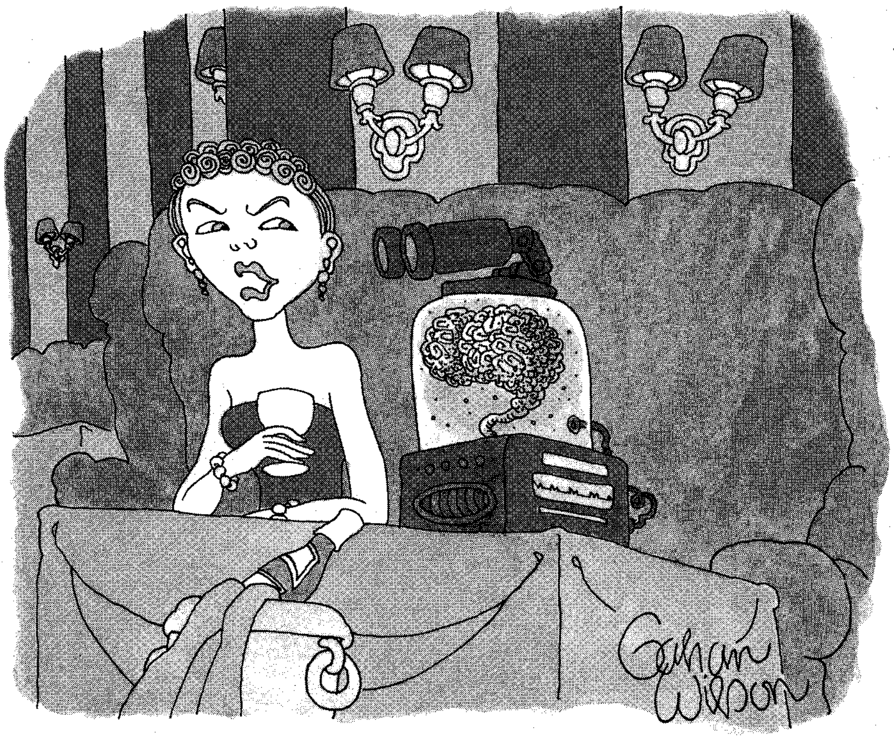
But, while Huck has to acknowledge his relationship with Jim, he can distance himself in other ways. First, he can call him a "nigger"—a word whose etymology Huck likely knows nothing about. Then he can fill the word with meaning, with the meanings he learned from his Pap: about the unconscionable lives that niggers lead; how their very presence can make a bad situation worse; and how associating with them can stain a good man's whiteness. "It was according to the old saying, 'Give a nigger an inch and he'll take an ell,' " Huck says. "Here was this nigger which I had as good as helped to run away, coming right out flat-footed and saying he would steal his children—children that belonged to a man I didn't even know; a man that hadn't ever done me no harm." The harm that is being done to Jim is beside the point; Pap's point of view, his voice, is all that Huck has ever known. But what his Pap didn't tell him—and what he learns on that journey down the river—is how a nigger can get into your conscience and weigh on it, like life itself. Huck, the paradigm of the American boy, doesn't know what manhood is until he learns to trust and love a nigger, and the nigger in himself, the part of him that lies outside the status quo, that runs toward a dream of America, in love with a freedom just out of reach. The river represents Huck's movement away from the terrible burden of racism he has inherited, and his opening up into the waters of the larger world. But he is also drowning in history, in the question of what defines him. His nigger love? A nigger loving him?

One is especially hungry for Twain's kind of transformative complexity after reading Randall Kennedy's thorny book, "Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word" (Pantheon; $22). Kennedy, a professor of law at Harvard, sets out to define the word "nigger," and its historical and political significance, through an examination of its use over time, in song lyrics, jokes, legal cases, hate speech, movies, television, literature, and urban street life. "I have invested energy in this endeavor because *nigger* is a key word in the lexicon of race relations and thus an important term in American politics," Kennedy tells us. "To be ignorant of its meanings and effects is to make oneself vulnerable to all manner of perils, including the loss of a job, a reputation, a friend, even one's life."

Love it, live with it, or want to eradicate it altogether, most adult Americans have some relationship to the word, and presumably Kennedy sees his book as a "healing," intended to treat our social and political cancer by verbalizing it. But his tone, which veers between polemics and special pleading, almost immediately distances the reader from what he is trying to do. "How should *nigger* be defined?" he asks in his opening paragraph. "Is it a part of the American cultural inheritance that warrants preservation? Why does *nigger* generate such powerful reactions? Is it a more hurtful racial epithet than insults such as *kike*, *wop*, *wetback*, *mick*, *chink*, and *gook*? Am I wrongfully offending the sensibilities of readers right now by spelling out *nigger* instead of using a euphemism such as *N-word*?" The questions are disingenuous. Instead of trying to answer them—by writing about the moral and psychological repercussions that the word has for blacks and for whites—Kennedy simply accumulates data, data that never quite add up to an idea. His book is aimed at a wide readership, and is intent


MICHAEL RAY 94 CHARLES
BEWARE

Michael Ray Charles's art draws from the history of racism in America detailed in Randall Kennedy's "Nigger."



"You're certainly a lot less fun since the operation."

on provoking debate, but it would attract little attention, for its writing or for its scholarship, were it not for the nearly pornographic weight of the six lowercase letters that are centered on the book jacket. The word appears in his book not as it is used within the complex fabric of epithets that blankets this country but as show-biz rhetoric, as a star turn that demands our attention rather than our engagement. To use "the N-word" would, of course, have been infinitely less impressive, less of an event. "Nigger" is Muhammad Ali. "N-word" is Pee-wee Herman.

Despite his studiously flavorless academic writing, Kennedy's approach is ahistorical. He does provide some clues to how the word "nigger"—with its two syllables that sound like a rake scratching against rusty, unyielding earth—came about:

> *Nigger* is derived from the Latin word for the color black, *niger*. According to the *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang*, it did not originate as a slur but took on a derogatory connotation over time. . . . When John Rolfe recorded in his journal the first shipment of Africans to Virginia in 1619, he listed them as "negars." A 1689 inventory of an estate in Brooklyn, New York, made mention of an enslaved "niggor" boy. . . . In the 1700s *niger* appeared in what the dictionary describes as "dignified argumentation" such as Samuel Sewall's denunciation of slavery, *The Selling of Joseph*. No one knows precisely when or how *niger* turned derisively into *nigger* and attained a pejorative meaning. We do know, however, that by the end of the first third of the nineteenth century, *nigger* had already become a familiar and influential insult.

Kennedy fails, however, to discuss the crucial links between the inception and growth of the word and the inception and growth of this nation. The word "American," too, was once a "familiar and influential insult." As Joseph J. Ellis writes in his brilliant study "Founding Brothers," the British used it "negatively, as a way of referring to a marginal or peripheral population unworthy of equal status with full-blooded Englishmen. . . . The word was uttered and heard as an insult that designated an inferior or subordinate people." And it is with this terrible, fascinating paradox that any discussion of the word "nigger" should begin. The colonists, who had legalized slavery long before the American Revolution began, were to the British a species of nigger—those who couldn't make it in the Old World. How could they rise above that classification? Only by generating a nigger class of their own in the New World. White Americans used the word "nigger" to define who they were by defining what they were not, and their distinctions were sanctioned by God, as they imagined Him. As James Baldwin wrote in 1963, "The Christian church . . . encouraged, if it did not formulate, the belief that conquest . . . was proof of the favor of God. God . . . rising on the wings of power, had become white."

Because niggers were not made in God's image—that is, white—the colonists were justified in thinking of them not as humans but as beasts, meant to cultivate the land and the low things of the earth. Slavery, an economic necessity in the new America, where cotton was the leading export and slave labor made the plantations possible, could be viewed as an act of mercy. When the Constitution was drawn up, it was based as much on protecting slave-owners as it was on declaring the abstraction known as freedom. In that famous document a slave counted as "three-fifths" of a man.

White Americans, by their own reckoning, were not descendants of "graceless Ham [who] leughed at his Dad, / Which made Canaan a niger," as Robert Burns wrote in 1786. This is the first of many citations of the word in the Oxford English Dictionary, a source that Kennedy cites in his endnotes but makes little use of in his text. He should have done more with it. The O.E.D.'s documentation of "nigger" shows how godforsaken and physically alienating blackness must have seemed to whites who had acquired their language and most of their ideas about "others" from the British imperialist regime. Who could have cared for anything as abominable as that "rank woolly-pated, thick-lipped nigger" Hartley Coleridge, the poet's son, described in 1849? As Byron noted, in an 1811 letter, there were white Christians and then there was "the rest of the world—Negers and what not."

If those distinctions were to blur, if a nigger were to claim equality with the rest of the world, if Jim—Everynigger—were to buy his wife and children back, what then? Economic collapse; white women raped; former lords and masters humiliated and dispossessed. So any nigger who seemed to think himself five-fifths of a man came in for "nigger-breaking," which Frederick Douglass described in his 1845 "Narrative":

> Does a slave look dissatisfied? It is said, he has the devil in him, and it must be whipped out.... Does he forget to pull off his hat at the approach of a white person? Then he is wanting in reverence, and should be whipped for it. Does he ever venture to vindicate his conduct, when censured for it? Then he is guilty of impudence,—one of the greatest crimes of which a slave can be guilty.

But a nigger is a nigger only if you can define him as such—and make him see himself as nothing but. What if a nigger literally can't *see* that he's a nigger? Geneva Handy Southall's "Blind Tom, the Black Pianist-Composer" tells the story of Thomas Greene Wiggins, who was born into slavery four years after Douglass's book was published. Taken up during Reconstruction by Colonel James Neil Bethune and his wife, Mary, who had owned his parents, Tom was treated like a pet—a pet with a remarkable and, as his owners found out, profitable talent for playing the piano and writing music. He could imitate any sound or piece of music upon hearing it, and, when he was eight, Colonel Bethune began carting him through the South and then the North, where, under the stage name Blind Tom, he became a big draw. Having grown up almost exclusively in the company of white people, he absorbed their language and ideas about blacks. Southall writes that once, while on tour, Tom was taken by a white m.c. to get his shoes shined:

> While sitting in the chair and hearing the Black bootblack recount to another Black bootblack a quarrel in which he was told to "go on yo niggah," Tom immediately interrupted and asked the bootblack, "Are you a nigger?" to which the bootblack replied in the affirmative, causing Tom to climb down immediately from a chair with only one shoe shined and say, "Tom ain't goin' to have his shoes blacked by no nigger."

This is a nineteenth-century version of a Richard Pryor routine: complex, humane, and as deeply absurdist and painful as the racism that Tom had learned at a white man's knee.

Because Kennedy never builds or creates a black person who lives on the page as Blind Tom does, none of his examples—most of which occupy only a paragraph or two—resonate as they should. Because he does not provide the analysis that would make his subject meaningful, his "nigger" is only a dusty, empty symbol. The central chapter of Kennedy's book, "*Nigger* in Court," makes this amply clear. It begins with a description of the Emmett Till case. In 1955, Till, a fourteen-year-old boy from Chicago, went to visit his relatives in Sumner, Mississippi, and was lynched for allegedly whistling at a white woman. Many black reporters and a black congressman from Michigan travelled to Sumner to monitor the trial of the two white men who were charged with the killing and to see that justice was carried out. It wasn't. And although the congressman and the reporters were greeted as "niggers" by the sheriff and his deputies, Kennedy does not explore the emotional or political ramifications of the situation—the fact that, once in the South, people who were in positions of power in the North became no more important than a dead fourteen-year-old black boy. He writes, "Although *nigger* was in the air throughout the Emmett Till case—from the promising indictment to the appalling acquittal—debate over the word did not play a central role in the litigation." Then he moves on to other cases, and to a discussion of the ways in which the pervasiveness of hate speech—and of false claims about it—has actually damaged its incendiary power. But, before reading on, one pauses to remember the photographs of Till's bloated and disfigured body that were published in the black press at the time. Till died because he was in body, and not in mind, a nigger. His death helped spark the rage that fuelled the battle for civil rights in the South.

At around the time I first read Kennedy's book, I happened to be in Chicago, where Emmett Till's mother, Mrs. Mamie Mobley, a widow, still lives. She is a beautiful light-skinned woman with an extraordinarily musical speaking voice. For many years, she taught in the Chicago school system. On the afternoon we met, she wore an oversized sweatshirt emblazoned with images of Negro leaders and martyrs—Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, Emmett Till. We sat at her dining-room table. Above us, on a cabinet, there were photographs of Emmett in a shirt and tie. He had the same heart-shaped face as his mother. She said, "I had those photographs of Emmett taken before he went South. I had so many of them taken. Now, why did I do that?" She spoke about her son lovingly, as if he had just stepped out on an errand and would return soon. She said that she still looks at his old notebooks and wonders why he didn't do better in this or that class. And as she talked she recalled her despair over her son's murder, how she contemplated suicide, how she insisted that his casket be left open at the time of his funeral so that the world could see what had happened to the flesh of her flesh, how "nigger-thinking" had killed her boy, and how it had almost killed her. Her story was a testimony to the power of the word, a real narrative of harm of the kind that is missing from Kennedy's book.

Had Till survived his trip to the South, would he have been inclined to call other black men "nigger" as an expression of fraternity? Kennedy, like many black men, believes that the word, used among blacks, does not mean what it means when a racist white uses it. "To proclaim oneself a nigger is to identify oneself as real, authentic, uncut, unassimilated, and unassimilable—the opposite, in short, of a Negro, someone whose rejection of *nigger* is seen as part of an effort to blend into the white mainstream," he writes. And there are other public figures who agree with him. "Nigga is... almost like saying brother," the pop star Ludacris tells us in last year's MTV documentary "When Hate Goes Pop." "It's our way of speech. It's the way we talk, it's slang. I don't think it downs anybody." In the same documentary, the rapper and producer Ice Cube says, "It's a word that we've taken and instead of letting it hurt us, like it used to, we use it."

Like the scars of slavery, the word "nigger" was brought up from the South to urban centers like New York and Chicago, where it was used almost as a joke—a country expression from down home, part of the living speech wrestled from an ignoble past. By the sixties, urban blacks had begun to use the word again. Over time, they changed the cadence ("nigguh," "nigga," "niggaz," and so on) to make it sound more ironic, hip: a once dirty word you'd call another black man because it was one of the few ways to identify him as a brother. It was also one of the few legacies that blacks could claim: no land, no laws, no forty acres and a mule—just "nigger," and the fraternity to be found in being a godless black man hitting the streets instead of the plantation. But to call one's brother a "nigger" is to describe one's own "wretchedness," as Richard Pryor said when he repudiated the word in the eighties. This is not self-determination. It is black Americans acting out of nostalgia for a past that discredited them as human beings. And, as V. S. Pritchett has pointed out, "The peculiar power of American nostalgia is that it is not only harking back to something lost in the past, but suggests also the tragedy of a lost future." Claude Brown, in his 1965 memoir, "Manchild in the Promised Land," captured the desperation of futureless urban black men looking back at their Southern roots:

> Going to New York was good-bye to the cotton fields, good-bye to "Massa Charlie," good-bye to the chain gang, and, most of all, good-bye to those sunup-to-sundown working hours. One no longer had to wait to get to heaven to lay his burden down; burdens could be laid down in New York. So, they came . . . following the sound of Gabriel's horn on that long-overdue Judgment Day. The Georgians came as soon as they were able to pick train fare off the peach trees. They came from South Carolina where the cotton stalks were bare. . . . [But] there was a tremendous difference in the way life was lived up North. There were too many people full of hate and bitterness crowded into a dirty, stinky, uncared-for closet-size section of a great city. . . . The children of these disillusioned colored pioneers inherited the total lot of their parents—the disappointments, the anger. To add to their misery, they had little hope of deliverance. For where does one run to when he's already in the promised land?

Kennedy's discussion of the appropriateness of using "nigger" in street parlance focusses almost exclusively on the world of men. He does not address how gender-specific the word is. Or what differentiates it from "nigger bitch," "nigger ho," and "nigger slut"—the feminine and therefore de-facto "lesser" versions of the insult or salutation. Black women, traditionally defined by the men for whom they are relegated to breeding and bleeding, are less likely to play the language game of self-definition. On the other hand, this has given them a certain freedom. In the nineteen-seventies, a number of black female writers—Gayl Jones and Toni Cade Bambara among

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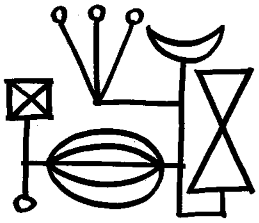
BRIEFLY NOTED

Be My Knife, *by David Grossman, translated from the Hebrew by Vered Almog and Maya Gurantz (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* When a thirty-three-year-old man named Yair catches a glimpse of Miriam at a class reunion, he senses a bond with her that goes beyond sexual attraction; because he is a practiced philanderer who is in search of something extraordinary, he implores her to enter a ruthlessly honest correspondence with him, on the understanding that they will never meet. "Even a voice is too real for the hallucination I want to have," he tells her. Most of the book is devoted to Yair's letters, and so we don't get to hear Miriam's responses until near the end. But it is Grossman's achievement that we understand from the start that Yair's vision of Miriam (and thus ours) is almost painfully incomplete. This is the divide Yair wants to cut through, and yet, Grossman suggests, this divide is what endures.

Tishomingo Blues, *by Elmore Leonard (Morrow; $25.95).* Dennis Lenahan, an itinerant high diver setting up for a Mississippi casino show, watches a Dixie drug-ring murder from his eighty-foot diving platform. Various factions—a smooth-talking Detroit con man, a mob-backed explosives expert, redneck crank dealers, local police on either side of the law—try to badger or buy his silence or coöperation, but Lenahan stays cool and uncommitted, until a "Shane"-like showdown at a local Civil War re-enactment. Lenahan's composure and his easy acrobatics feel like a stand-in for the author's; both seem to play it by ear even after the guns start firing. And the hurtling plot twists keep coming, right up to the perfect rip of a finish.

Stillwater, *by William F. Weld (Simon & Schuster; $23).* The flooding of five towns in rural western Massachusetts for the creation of a reservoir is the turning point in this elegiac novel about devastation in the name of progress and the durability of childhood memories. In 1938, Jamieson Kooby is fifteen years old—still enough of a boy to roam the Swift River Valley looking for crows to shoot and catfish to behead, and just enough of a young man to fall in love with Hannah, a strange local farm girl who is a compendium of lore about regional historical figures she has known in her previous lives. Weld, a former governor of Massachusetts and the author of two previous, slighter novels, is eloquent about the stark mysteries of the New England landscape and sly about the shenanigans of the valley's not-so-simple denizens. When Betty Catlett, at a ceremony for the new Winsor Dam, objects to everyone's getting an early start on the buffet lunch even though a hurricane is coming—"I promised Mr. Winsor no one would eat a thing until he had finished speaking"—Jamieson's great uncle Ed says, "Eating deviled eggs don't make much noise."

Fair Warning, *by Robert Olen Butler (Atlantic Monthly; $24).* Amy Dickerson, the sleek heroine of this novel by the author of "A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain," is an auctioneer at a second-tier New York auction house. It's not Butler's fault that the book feels dated—bets are off, right now, on bad Renoirs—but who else can be blamed for the writing ("There was a phlegmy grinding in the room")? Even so, Amy's hands-on appraisal of an expensive Frenchman and her tiny attempts at becoming human—making peace with her Texan mother, her dim sister Missy, and the ghost of her daddy, who never forgave her for abandoning the cattle business—are diverting. Spending time in Butler's affluent New York is like curling up with the first chapter of "The Bonfire of the Vanities."



them—began to work in the black vernacular and to use "nigger" to evoke a man's world that was as interesting to them as it was interested *in* them. Standing on the margin of the margin, some black women artists have been able to address the word in ways that are not mere posturing. The singer Mary J. Blige, for instance, has not followed her male contemporaries in embracing "nigger" as code for teen-age cool. "I'm not calling people niggers," she said. "Because it's a downgrade, you know what I'm saying?" In Blige's rejection of "nigger" as a fashionable term of endearment is the understanding that the word, its history and its hurt, cannot be explained away.

Even once you've made it through the numerous racist song titles, the collection of jokes the author punches up from a Web site called KKKomedy Central—Micetrap's Nigger Joke Center ("Q: What do you call a nigger boy riding a bike? A: Thief!"), and the exhaustive lists of court cases, it is difficult to glean exactly what point Kennedy is trying to make. He argues that "nigger" is merely a word, used in all strata of society, and he seems to agree with Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said that a word "is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged," but "the skin of a living thought [that] may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used." Holmes, however, was not writing from the point of view of someone who had been called a nigger. W. E. B. Du Bois—whom Kennedy doesn't quote—certainly had been by the time he wrote, in 1928, "Do not . . . make the all too common error of mistaking names for things. . . . If a thing is despised, either because of ignorance or because it is despicable, you will not alter matters by changing its name. If men despise Negroes, they will not despise them less if Negroes are called 'colored' or 'Afro-American.'" Du Bois gets at what Kennedy doesn't: the difference between a group that is defined by others and a group that defines itself.

"Can a relationship between a black person and a white one be such that the white person should properly feel authorized, at least within the confines of that relationship, to use the N-word?" Kennedy asks. "For me the answer is yes. Carl Van Vechten, for instance, wrote of 'niggers' in correspondence with his friend Langston Hughes, and Hughes did not object. . . . *Should* Hughes have objected? No. Van Vechten, a key supporter of the Harlem Renaissance, had shown time and again that he abhorred racial prejudice . . . and treasured his black friends." This is not a good example. Kennedy ignores the complicated distribution of power between Van Vechten and Hughes. Van Vechten, when he met Hughes, was already rich and well connected. Hughes was obscure and ambitious. Imagine Hughes jeopardizing everything by contradicting Van Vechten: "Listen, Carlo. I object to this and all racial epithets. You are using it simply as a test to see how far you can go in our friendship, and as a means of identifying with what you can never be." The commissions and the parties would have dried up faster than you could say Brer Rabbit. In "The Big Sea," Hughes wrote, "The word *nigger*, you see, sums up for us who are colored all the bitter years of insult and struggle in America." His silence with Van Vechten was simply the price that every black artist and intellectual pays: to climb out of obscurity, he must endure the language of whites whose humor and cocktail-party chatter is still drawn from the well of Reconstruction. Talk about "nigger-breaking."

"As *nigger* is more widely disseminated and its complexity is more widely appreciated, censuring its use—even its use as an insult—will become more difficult," Kennedy writes in his conclusion. "Still, despite these costs, there is much to be gained by allowing people of all backgrounds to yank *nigger* away from white supremacists, to subvert its ugliest denotation, and to convert the N-word from a negative into a positive appellation. This process is already well under way, led in the main by African-American innovators." Kennedy's belief that it's possible to convert the word from negative to positive is not only naïve but dangerous. This is, after all, America. And we—blacks and whites—are still cultivating the nigger in our hearts and minds, because we cannot do without him. For both races, that nigger defines who we are not. He is the third partner in a marriage that we cannot abide but cannot

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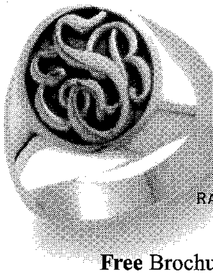

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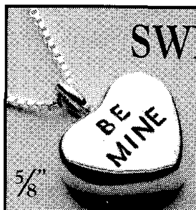

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give up. In "The Sound and the Fury," Faulkner's Quentin, Huck Finn's literary cousin, says:

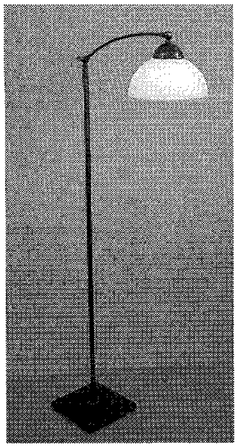
> I used to think that a Southerner had to be always conscious of niggers. I thought that Northerners would expect him to. When I first came East I kept thinking You've got to remember to think of them as colored people not niggers, and if it hadn't happened that I was thrown with many of them, I'd have wasted a lot of time and trouble before I learned that the best way to take all people, black or white, is to take them for what they think they are, then leave them alone. That was when I realized that a nigger is not a person so much as a form of behavior; a sort of obverse reflection of the white people he lives among.

"To take them for what they think they are, then leave them alone" is not what anyone has done. We make of each other what we need, or what we need to despise, which is all too often the same thing. And when we have language to define our world the trouble begins. Language fixes us, and fixes hate. People react to this fixity with despair, which results in self-righteousness or in self-love.

What would Nigger Jim make of all this now? Certainly, he exists. He still lives on a river, but it's up North now. He is, as always, companionable to white boys who do but cannot love him. He sees in their eyes, and in every question they ask, the "Nigger" that stands before his name. Sometimes he goes to the movies. He sat through the cute racism of Wes Anderson's "The Royal Tenenbaums," for instance. In this film about a brood of former child prodigies who have failed to live up to their promise, and a father who has never fulfilled his own, the only functioning adult is the mother, Etheline. Etheline gets up, she goes to work, she tries to love and understand her children. But, since she is a Tenenbaum, she must have a quirk, and that peculiarity is her ability to care for a black man, her accountant, Henry. Etheline's estranged husband, Royal, is comically outraged at what he sees as her betrayal—of him, and of white men in general. He calls Henry a "buck," and talks to him in an approximation of street language that the white audience is supposed to find amusing. "Nigger" is implied, but Anderson veers away from it at the last minute, aware that if it were spoken it would break through the movie's glib veneer and expose the mean fairy tale at its heart.

Jim also saw "Monster's Ball," a film being heralded as "controversial," largely because it shows a white man overcoming his legacy of racism by fucking a poor black woman his father calls "nigger." But, in the end, the word means as much as their fucking does. The characters are not people but abstractions, which feel as if they had been lifted from a lesser Erskine Caldwell story, and are just as dated. Halle Berry, who is the film's "nigger bitch," plays a white man's idea of black female suffering—nothing too overwhelming or internal. With her distinctly European features, she is the child Jim imagines Etheline and Henry having—a girl whose quirkiness is a surface tic and not a sign of character. But Jim rarely gives his opinion of these events and what they mean to the culture of integration. No one wants his nigger by the door wrestled to the ground and broken down. And, in any case, that nigger can't be killed by one man—it would take a nation.

Sometimes Jim longs to see black and white American life expressed with the metaphorical frankness and surreal vision of a different film: Samuel Fuller's "White Dog," from 1982, in which a dog trained to attack blacks is defended by the white woman who owns it, and who sees only her love for her pet and not the dog's catastrophic effect on the community it attacks. Jim also recalls the wit and sadness and power of a book he read almost thirty years ago: the original "Nigger," a memoir published in 1964 by the comedian and activist Dick Gregory, who used the title not as a marketing tool but as a joke on the tradition he was working against—protest literature, with its typically raw titles ("Black Boy," "No Name in the Street," "Daddy Was a Number Runner"). By calling the book "Nigger," Gregory replaced rhetoric with candor. He wrote, "Last time I was down South I walked into this restaurant, and this white waitress came up to me and said: 'We don't serve colored people here.' I said: 'That's all right, I don't eat colored people. Bring me a whole fried chicken.' About that time these three cousins come in, you know the ones I mean, Klu, Kluck, and Klan, and they say: 'Boy, we're givin' you fair warnin'. Anything you do to that chicken, we're gonna do to you.' About then the waitress brought me my chicken. . . . So I put down my knife and fork, and I picked up that chicken, and I *kissed* it." ♦



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A festival of flamenco.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Flamenco is one of a number of great lyric forms (jazz, tap, tango, and others) that grew up not in the official venues—the church, the court—but in the bars and the whorehouses. According to the historian Timothy Mitchell, flamenco owes its development, in large measure, to private music parties put on by wealthy playboys in southern Spain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These were not genteel gatherings. One grandee, Mitchell reports, "liked to preside over a group of artists and three or four prostitutes, locked up in a room together for several days with two or three cases of wine, a ham, a bucket, and a mattress." The artists were poor gypsies, and their art was about their lives—specifically, to quote Mitchell, about "poverty, hunger, prisons, jails, hospitals, prostitution, alcohol consumption, taverns, insanity, violent death, the caprices of cruel fate, and the futility of effort." When, in dwelling on these matters, they became *emocionado*, they would rip their clothes and throw their chairs. Elsewhere, the violence was confined to the vocal style. *Cante jondo*, flamenco's "deep song," was a sort of a cross between singing and howling. The voice, usually hoarse, burst and broke, and burst out again, in long cascades of anguished melisma: "Ay-ay-ay!"

ISABEL MUÑOZ/AGENCE VU

Flamenco developed at parties where gypsies lamented the cruelty of their fate.

Then, as so often happens, the main culture got wind of the subculture, and vice versa. Already by the mid-nineteenth century, flamenco was showing the influence of operetta. At the same time, mainstream theatres and cafés were hiring *flamencos*. The singing and dancing became more refined, more complicated, whereupon the connoisseurs began complaining that the art was being destroyed by commercialization. They were soon joined by the intellectuals. In a 1922 lecture, Federico García Lorca warned that the pure spring of *cante jondo*, the matrix of "the naked and spine-chilling emotion of the first oriental races," was being "stained with the dark wine of the professional pimp." Such denunciations of modernization have continued up to the present, and they have had some effect. Periodically, old, forgotten *flamencos* would be hunted down, hosed off, and taken to recording studios and dance festivals. The thrilling show "Flamenco Puro," which played on Broadway in 1986, was motivated by the same preservationist spirit.

Other *flamencos* went on modernizing, however, because they knew that there was an entertainment industry out there that they could be a part of if they miked their floors and got some cooler clothes. They succeeded. As the flamenco expert Brook Zern said at a 1997 conference, "It used to be we could go to these artists and say, 'Here's ten bucks—sing all night,' and they were kind enough and poor enough to do it." That is no longer the case—a

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fact reflected in the scheduling of the World Music Institute's four-night "Flamenco Festival" at City Center and Town Hall. The series included a number of the most important people in contemporary flamenco, yet each program was given only one night. When I asked someone at the World Music Institute why, she answered, "Gypsies are expensive."

The festival showed us both the traditionalists and the modernizers, and the latter were something else, believe me. I'm glad García Lorca didn't live to see Israel Galván, who opened the festivities. According to the program notes, people call Galván the "Nijinsky of flamenco," by which, I presume, they don't mean that he's a good dancer (though he certainly is) but that he is an experimentalist, in the modernist tradition, the tradition that gave us "ugly" instead of "pretty." Galván appeared onstage in a black shirt, tails out, and black pants. (I thought he was a stagehand until I saw his shoes.) Then he did a series of dances in which he always stopped before we thought he would, always held his arms in a stiff, poking-out way—as opposed to the curved arms of traditional flamenco—and basically drove us nuts and made us think. I respected him, and he was a good, cold-water-in-the-face introduction to the festival's *modernismo.*

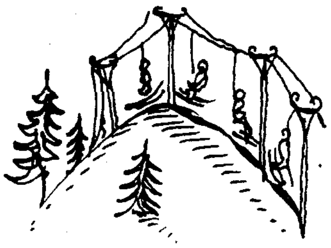
Meanwhile, his singer, Rafael de Utrera, was an absolutely classic flamenco *cantaor.* Rafael sang as though he had just emerged from a car wreck. Out of his mouth would come a long phrase of passionate, hair-raising vocalization. Then he would fall silent and wring his hands and look at the floor and think about what he was going to sing next, or—as it sometimes seemed—think about whether he *was* going to sing something next, as opposed to going out and having a drink, or maybe checking into a hospital. During these pauses, we practically stood up in our seats. ("Tell us more! Tell us what life means!") Eventually, he would start up again. This was a naked, private, one-time-only performance, a perfect example of the here-I-stand existential posture that is the defining trait of flamenco. So, while Galván gave us the new style, Rafael gave us the old, and it was nice to see both in the opening act.

The old style was not easy to find in the next act, by the Compañia María Pagés. If Galván has been looking at early modernism, Pagés has been looking at Broadway. Indeed, she has been dancing on Broadway, in "Riverdance." I think I know why the "Riverdance" people chose her. Not only is she a true virtuoso, with a company to match (Nelida Tirado, who hails from New York City, was the standout in the ensemble), but she has a tall, lovely body, with a huge tract of expressive territory between armpit and pelvis. When she moves, you can read it from miles away—which, in the theatres that produce "Riverdance," is where you may be sitting. But, with all these beauties, Pagés's company was the one dead act in the festival. From flamenco you can remove the ruffled dresses, the snaking arms, the broken heart, but you cannot take away the live music, and that's what Pagés did. In consequence, we not only had to listen to canned music; we were deprived of the give-and-take between dancers and singers and musicians that is fundamental to flamenco's assertion of realness. Actually, there wasn't going to be much of that in Pagés's group, anyway, because most of the dancing was ensemble work. (Hence no improvisation. The dancers have to fit together.) Pagés's show was not unexciting, but the excitement was like so much of Broadway's: there's a lot of sizzle and pop while you're watching it, and then, the next day, you can't remember a thing.

After Galván and Pagés, I thought I had seen everything in the way of flamenco modernization, but I hadn't. I hadn't seen camp flamenco. That occurred the following night, when the festival presented the Ballet Flamenco Antonio Canales. Canales is a pale, strung-out-looking man who's a dead ringer for Tony Curtis in "Some Like It Hot." Like Pagés, he is an excellent dancer, but it took me a long time to realize that, because I was so riveted by his mannerisms: the eye-rolling, the lip-quivering, the strands-of-sweaty-hair-pushing, the whole Sarah Bernhardtian, James Brownian theatre of his wounded soul. When it all became too much for him, he would exit and go wash his face and then come out and break down again. Was this straight? I don't think so. Canales looked to be having a good time. Also, the young men who took the stage when he was off recovering were showcased in a curiously fetishistic manner. (One of these fellows afforded me the first underarm-hair sighting I have ever seen in a male flamenco act.) They were also given a very glitzy surround. The lights changed colors every two minutes, and the floor was miked to within an inch of its life.

Then there were the old-time traditionalists, El Güito and Manuela Carrasco, both veterans of "Flamenco Puro." El Güito spent too much time dancing with a partner who was not up to his level, but finally he came out alone and did a *soleá*. This dance, whose name means solitude, is the intense, long-phrased (twelve-count) solo that is more or less the grand sweepstakes of flamenco. El Güito is famous for his version, and he showed us why: the lofted arm, the high chest, the spun-steel waist, and above all the tapping, like an oration by Pericles.

Carrasco was even better and even more traditional. She is middle-aged, with the settled-into-itself body that is so pleasing in flamenco dancers. She wore the polka-dot dress; she wore the flower in her hair. And she gave us, in dancing, what Rafael de Utrera—who sang for her as well as for Galván—gave us in singing: the act of heroic introspection, supported by musical virtuosity, that is the core of the art. When she got tired, she was spelled by two male dancers—regular, unglamorous gents—who performed little solos. This passing of the spotlight, with its note of generosity, was there in all the acts, as it must be. (A soloist can dance for only so long.) But somehow it was more obvious in Carrasco's act, because she charged everything around her with a kind of moral seriousness. At the end, she gave us the superb flamenco exit, where the dancer just sort of says, "That's it—I've had enough," and walks off, her ruffles scurrying behind her while the music is still playing.



The festival's most spectacular act, however, was its last one, the Ballet Flamenco Eva Yerbabuena. Yerbabuena is not young, and she has a cute little rounded body, exactly what you don't need for flamenco. If she is a modernizer, this consists in her ability to put together a flamenco *show*. Like tap, its American cousin, flamenco is short-breathed. A good artist will come out and show you his specialties and tell you who he is, and that's about it. This is not a five-act deal. But Yerbabuena put together an entire evening, with one act about history and others about the present; one act about the upper body, home of the soul, and others about the lower body, home of virtuosity. In the upper-body dance—it looked like a Spanish "Dying Swan"—she wore the traditional ruffled gown, all in white. To see her, as she moved, nudging the dress around, treating it as if it were a partner, was to understand the process whereby a modern person could fall in love with an old art. But the great thing was her *soleá*, in which, aided by her superb singers, above all Enrique "El Extremeño," she seemed to touch on every known facet of human experience. She swung; she scooped the rhythms out of the floor; she let us have a little fun, with the result that when, eventually, she took the plunge—straightened up, braced herself, and dove into flamenco's *duende*, or soul—we believed her and followed her. She made my life pass before my eyes, and she did it without any fuss about modernism. "You make it modern by revealing yourself," she told the *Times*, "not with embellishments. What's difficult is revealing yourself."

Yerbabuena, I am told, is the hottest flamenco act in Spain. As for New York, no one else in the festival got the ovation she did. The spectators jumped to their feet, screaming, and they stayed and stayed, letting other people get the taxicabs. ♦

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Frederick Wiseman's "Domestic Violence."

BY DAVID DENBY

In Frederick Wiseman's new documentary, "Domestic Violence," which is set largely at a shelter for battered women in Tampa, Florida, some of the women are sullen and abashed and so quiet that they seem to have relinquished the right to be indignant over what has happened to them. But others are blazingly articulate, their stories leaping from them in magnificent tirades. There is one woman in particular whom no one who sees this film will ever forget—a powerhouse, forty years old, with strong hands, glittering dark eyes, and a small mouth that contracts with rage. She is sitting in a group session, sharing stories with other women, and, among many other things, she says this:

> My kids did not have to endure what I endured, because my husband of sixteen years tried walking into my daughter's room, and I took a frying pan and hit him upside the head with it, and split his head open, and I told him if he ever touched her in a way that was unbecoming I'd kill him, because I wasn't gonna have her go through what I went through. . . . And it hurts really, really, really, really bad to know that you would marry somebody that would do something like that to your children.

That was the end of their marriage. But we later learn from the woman that she fell into a Punch-and-Judy relationship with another man. She may have saved her children, but she could not save herself.

The other women do not hit back, and many of them have been knocked around for years, staying with men who broke their bones or came after them with knives. They stayed because of children; or because they didn't have control of their bank accounts; or because their husbands locked up their wallets at night and took them away during the day; or because they had lost themselves in a labyrinth of dependency. One woman in her fifties, frankly amazed at her own lurid tales, describes how she finally escaped into the night, naked and bloody, running down the center of a road (she thought that her husband might have been hiding in the bushes). She made it to a friend's house and from there, presumably, to the shelter. "Domestic Violence" is a chronicle of victimization in which the women's suffering is increased by their knowledge that they have been partly complicit in it. As the history of the frying-pan fighter suggests, there was something in the women, or at least in some of them, that drew them to violent men and kept them near those men for years. But a termination point has been reached: the women in the shelter have left. The film is fervently devoted to the near-impossible act of walking out.

"Domestic Violence," which plays through February 12th at Film Forum and will eventually air on PBS, is the thirty-first of Wiseman's documentaries. Most of them are about American institutions, good and bad, beginning with "Titicut Follies," his muckraking portrait of a facility for the criminally insane, made in 1967. Judged both as reporting and as art—many of the films have a poetic density of structure—it is a series without parallel in movie history. In every film, Wiseman omits titles, narration, and any sort of explanation. He thrusts us into the middle of things, and though at first it's hard to look at some of the women in "Domestic Violence," we are soon looking and listening very closely, trying to sort out the hints and allusions and repetitions.

The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for six combined issues: Feb. 18 & 25, Apr. 22 & 29, June 17 & 24, Aug. 19 & 26, Oct. 14 & 21, Dec. 23 & 30) by The Condé Nast Publications Inc. (4 Times Square, N.Y., N.Y. 10036-6592), which is a subsidiary of Advance Publications, Inc. Vol. LXXVII, No. 47, February 11, 2002. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office.

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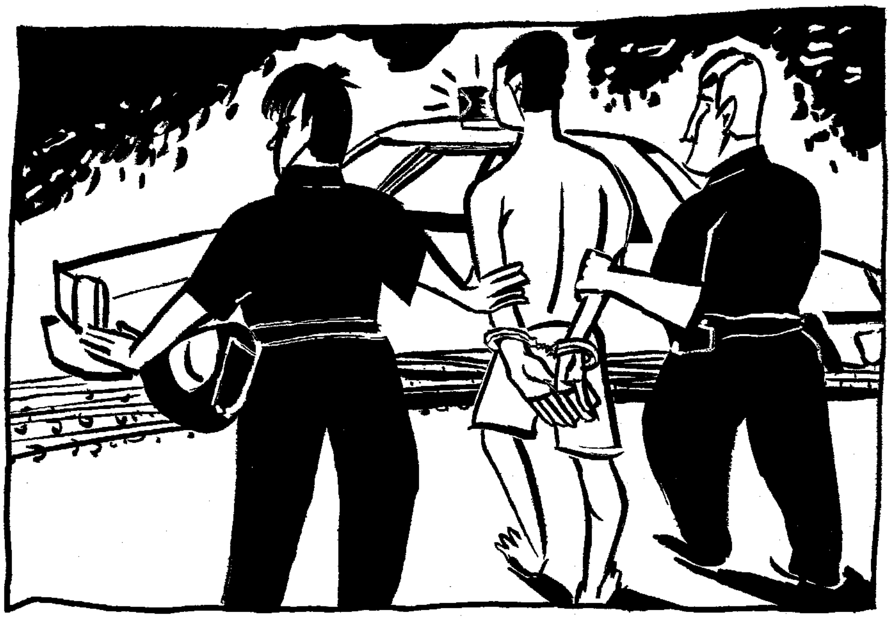
What do the stories mean? What are the patterns? (The film differs from the usual TV exposition of abuse in that Wiseman senses that these knots can never be neatly untangled.) With a hundred or so hours of footage to choose from, Wiseman organizes his material not by topic but organically, weaving scenes together for moral and emotional intricacy and suggestiveness. In the end, after more than three hours, our effort of attention becomes so intense that we are cleansed of squeamishness and fear.

The initial scenes are set in the morning, and the movie, which was shot over a period of two months, then passes through afternoon and nighttime episodes, as if traversing a single day; the point, of course, is that this mayhem occurs every day in America. It's a mortifying national portrait. In a brief prologue, we see Tampa's glass office towers, then Wiseman retreats to cruddy-looking stores and strip malls along the highways leading out of the city, and from there to broken-down neighborhoods of tract homes and mangy gardens. It's America at its most incoherent, where collections of workers and shoppers live without much community, and people fall through the cracks.



Wiseman's film examines the ambiguous nature of human relationships.

TOM BACHTELL

After the prologue, Wiseman joins the cops, picking up where he left off thirty-three years ago in "Law and Order." In that eye-opening picture, made during the heyday of the counterculture, the Kansas City police force came off not as "pigs" but as men presented with domestic situations that their training had not prepared them for. Decades of psychology and social work have since intervened: the Tampa police we see in "Domestic Violence" are very good at calming people down. In the first scene, they confront a strutting shirtless male, maybe sixty years old. His on-again, off-again partner, a grandmother with lank hair, has called the police because he has been walloping her. As the cops take him away, the woman says, "I don't want nothing to happen to him." Then, in a wail, "He's got to let me *go!*" "Domestic Violence" examines the ambiguous nature of human bonds, the nightmare versions of romance and family love. Virtually all the people we see, male and female, insist that they love the ones they torment.

Additional scenes with the police follow, and then a long central section about life in the Spring, Tampa's largest shelter for battered women and their children. The women come in bruised, bandaged, and they submit to an extensive interview. After seeing the wrangling couple at the beginning of the movie, we may think that all the women at the shelter are uneducated, but that stereotype quickly gets revised. One woman, so ashamed that she can hardly speak, has a doctorate; her husband, it turns out, resents her education. An elegant elderly woman turns up after tearing herself away from a man who has bullied her and their children for almost fifty years. At the shelter, every woman, young and old, is given a bed and some work to do; the young children go to a school in the building.

The teachers work with the children's drawings, teasing out their traumas. Like teachers everywhere, they instruct by asking questions. Only here the questions go like this: What do you do when an angry dad shows up? (You go upstairs and call the cops.) The scenes with the children are perhaps the most heartrending. Having been abused themselves, or having merely witnessed violence, some of them, we hear repeatedly, have abused their younger sisters or brothers. Like some malignant curse in an unfathomable Greek myth, the desire to commit violence cannot be expunged; it repeats itself through the generations. At the shelter, the staff does what it can to establish new relationships for the women, many of whom have never had anyone who would listen to them. The woman who fought her husband, for instance, tells her story for the first time and experiences, she says, a greater burst of happiness than she has ever known.

The movie appears to end with a modest expression of hope, but Wiseman has a sinister episode waiting for us. As the women talk, we hear a great deal about men: violent but sweet-talking men, magicians who put women under a spell. But where are they? The men threaten to become unreal. Then Wiseman adds another sequence with the police. This time, a man has called them. He could be a cousin of the ranting old macho in the opening sequence. Drunk, sixtyish, shirtless, he has a long blond mustache and long hair and a courtly manner, like a deep-voiced grandee of the Old South. It's his house, and he wants his girlfriend thrown out, because, he says, she won't talk to him and he might do her harm. He speaks to the police as if it were *their* problem, and he had nothing to do with it. But the woman, who has a soft, pleading manner, is ill and has nowhere to go, and she desperately wants to get some sleep. The police reason with the man, but in this case there's nothing they can legally do, and, in the end, as a feeling of horror hits us like a wave, they leave these two to spend the night together. ♦

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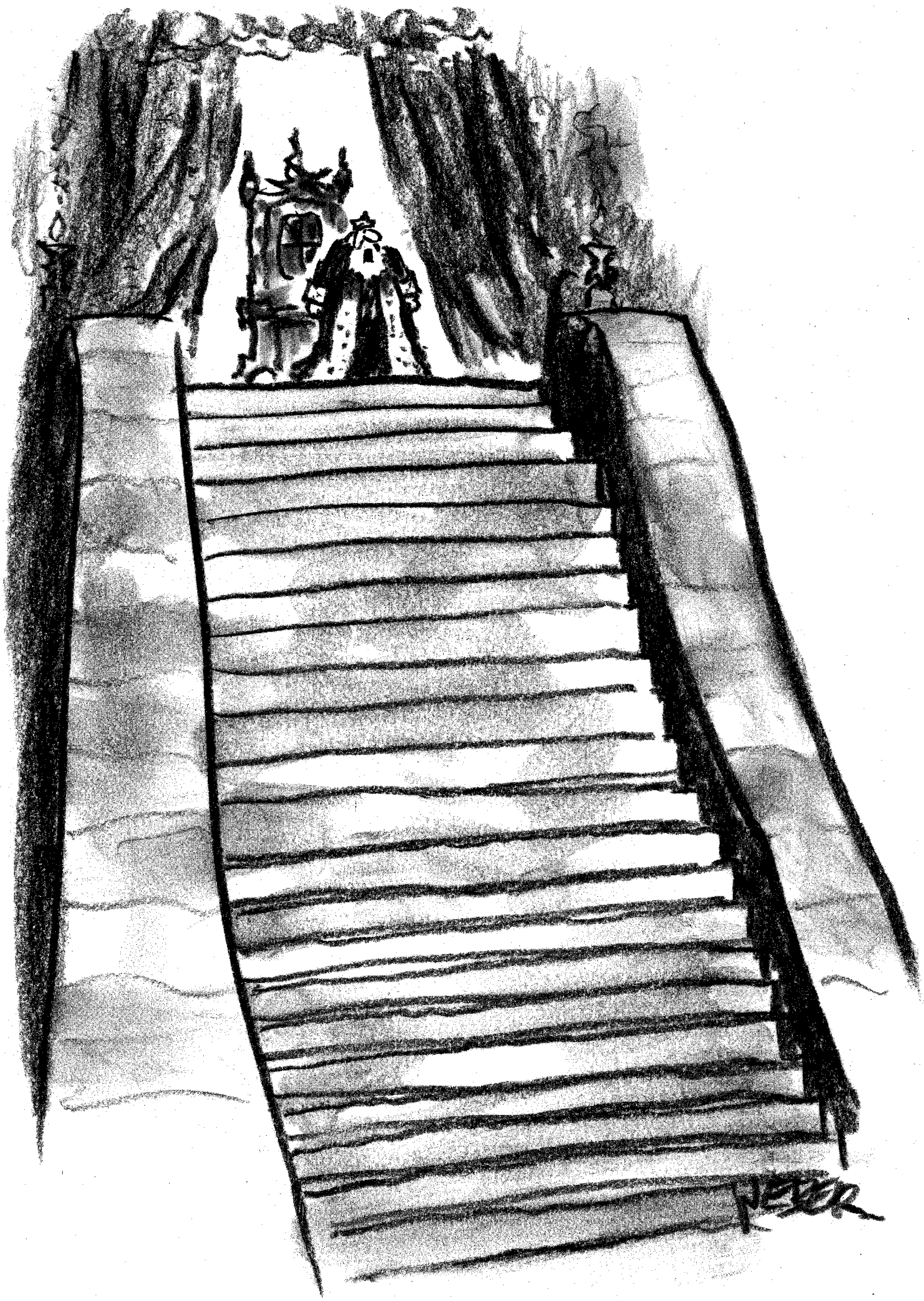
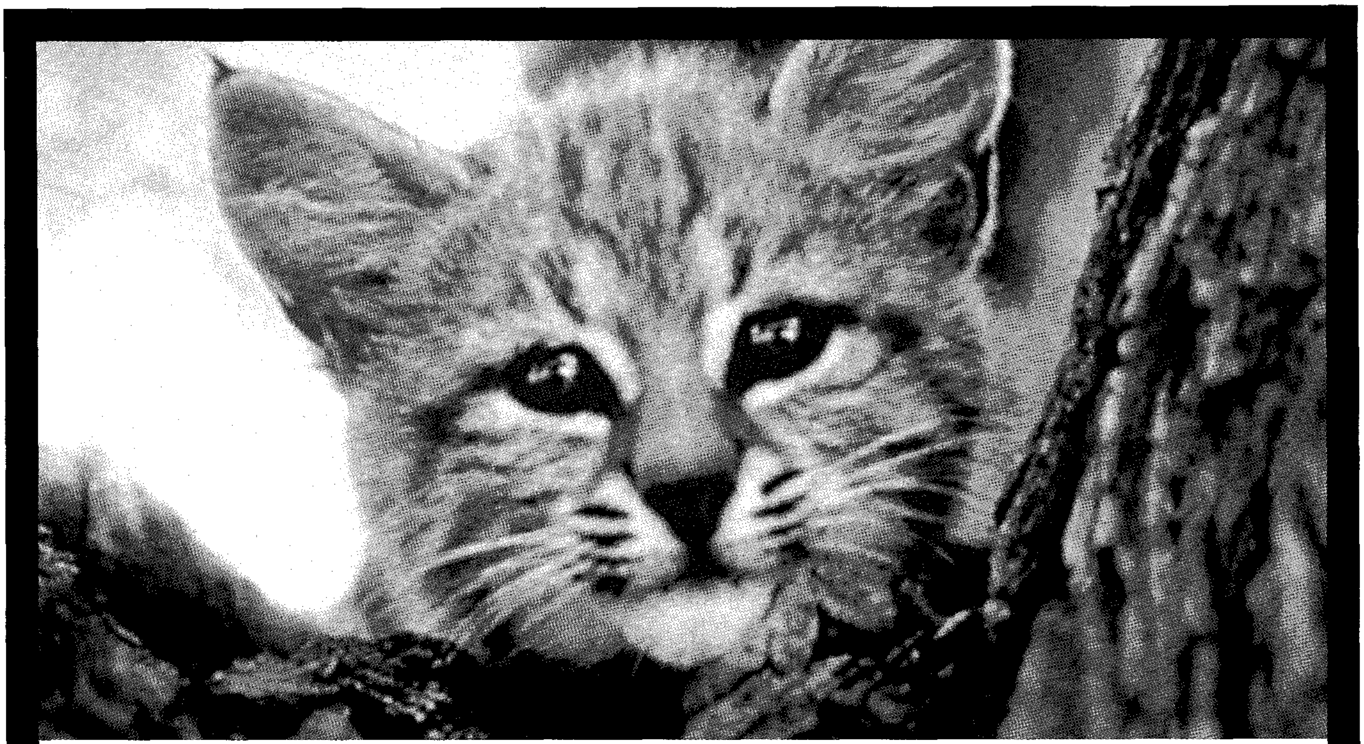


"Where the hell's my Slinky?"



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